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# WRIT IN SAND

# WRIT IN SAND

BY

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

*"Vivo si miro adelante*
*Muero si miro hacia atrás*
*Me columpio en el ahora*
*Un dia menos, un dia mas."*

—SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA

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# PREFACE

## TO THOUGHT-READERS

PREFACES are written usually either to disarm the public, or to give a foretaste of the writer's quality. They fail, generally, in both their objects. Your preface-monger is constrained perforce to give himself away, for he speaks as man to man, not through the mouth of any of his characters.

The one advantage we poor footsloggers on the dull paths of prose possess over those who on the wings of verse attempt to scale Olympus, is that we are not forced, as they are, ever to meet our readers really face to face, unless we venture into prefaces, prologues, forewords, or what you call 'em. They, on the contrary, if their verse is to rise to poetry, must put their souls' blood into all they write, or remain stodged for ever in the slough of versifying. This may be the reason why most actors, even the best of them, are usually poor public speakers, for it is vastly different for a man to stand up and utter his own thoughts,

and to deliver well-conned-over words already written for him.

Therefore, few writers, nowadays, care to come to close grips with those they write for, fearing perhaps that a half-nelson, or cross-buttock, may leave them sprawling on the ground. Again, your public, avid of details as to a writer's private life, thinking perhaps, but absolutely falsely, that they assist it to understand the man, or perhaps out of mere lewd curiosity—the curse of common minds—seems to imagine that a painter or a poet either must have some secret, or that when pen or brush is laid over, that he is different in essence from any other man.

Nature has so contrived it, and I admit it is annoying of her, that even genius must eat and sleep, endure the pangs of tooth and belly ache, fall into and fall out of love, and fulfil all the functions of any ordinary man, that I refrain from setting down, not wishing to offend the gentlewomen, although I know they are not in especial mealy-mouthed. Thus nothing pleases the "respectable" so consumedly as to read that a writer or a politician drinks or takes drugs in secret, keeps a fat mis-

tress as a foil to a thin wife, changes his socks infrequently, or any other detail of the kind that brings him nearer to themselves. Far fewer care about the workings of his mind, those little self-revealing details that are certain to leak out, in an aside, a preface, footnote or what not, that, generally without his knowledge, force him to drop the mask. The spoken word can be manipulated, so as to conceal the speaker's personality, but when a writer takes his pen in hand, in spite of all that he can do, it is straight manifest.

It is a natural instinct in the majority of men to keep a secret garden in their souls, a something that they do not care to talk about, still less to set down, for the other members of the herd to trample on.

This is most manifest in those who write their own biographies, confessions, memoirs or by whatsoever title publishers palm on them, just as a card-sharper palms a card upon a mug.

Possibly, St. Augustine and Jean Jacques Rousseau imagined that they had unpacked their budget so completely, nothing remained to tell, when they had set down their misdeeds, that after all in neither case were very black,

to feed their vanity. A Rabelaisian anecdote of old times in France relates that in the tumbril a murderer and a ratepayer of the Cities of the Plains were going to be hanged. The crowd was little interested in the murderer, but called out vociferously, "Quel est le bougre?" The nonconformist, being a well-mannered man, stood up and doffing his hat courteously, said, "Citoyens, c'est moi." Thus, without need of any preface, in his one flight of oratory that has come down to us, he revealed all that the public had a right to know about him. The opportunity was such as does not fall to every literary man when he sets out to talk about himself. It placed its utterer high in the ranks of those who write, have written, or will write confessions, and overtops them all in spontaneity, lack of premeditation, and in its brevity.

Looking over this, my booklet, with the distaste most writers surely feel for the perusal of their own writing, for few of us can, as is reported of Jehovah, look at their work and say that it is good, I ask my readers to be lenient with "The Stationmaster's Horse."

Sometimes the smell of an orange freshly

cut recalls the scent of the wild orange trees in bloom, that night, upon my ride. Then I remember how sticky the piece of rapadura, that I had in my pocket, made my fingers, when I ate a piece of it, and how I gave what remained over to the "Zebruno," when I unsaddled him.

The ride, the horse, the fireflies, the musky odour of the alligators at the "pass," the rustling palm trees, and the Southern Cross that lighted the "Zebruno" and myself in our too brief companionship, were stamped upon my brain, more years ago than, as we say in Scottish phrase, "I care to mind."

The portraits of my two departed friends ("may the earth lay lightly on them!") I wrote because I thought I owed it to them to endeavour to preserve something of their strange personality.

Most likely, in writing of their characters, I have done nothing but reveal my own, without my knowledge.

If so, a "fico" for the revelation; all I can do is to stand up, and taking off my hat salute the public, hoping the tumbril will jog gingerly, to its appointed goal.

R. B. Cunninghame Graham.

# WRIT IN SAND

At sundown, long lines of motor vans, as huge as arks, converged upon a sandy waste space of the southern little town. Over it towered the Ligurian Alps, rugged and sun-scorched. The waves of Mare Nostrum just lapped against the sea wall that bounded the neglected piece of ground on which a canvas city was to arise, like Jonah's gourd, during the night. The vans scrunched on the pebbles as they came up in long procession, and formed a great corral.

Each monstrous car took its own place with mathematical precision, for Amar's Circus had been long upon the road, having pushed what it called upon its posters "Une Audacieuse Randonnée" as far as Angora, and was now back again in France.

From the cars came the cries of animals, the miauling of the lions, the grunts of camels, and the stamping of the horses eager to be fed.

The scent that can be best described as "Bouquet de Cirque," compounded of the odours of the various animals, sawdust and orange peel, of petrol, dried perspiration, leather, of

cordage, canvas ill laid up when damp, cheap perfumes and cosmetics, all the quintessence of a world apart from any other kind of world, a world where men and women risk their lives daily, and reck nothing of it, a world in which they live, in fellowship with horses, elephants and mules, a fellowship that makes them different to all other kind of men, as sailors were in the old world of wind-jammers, floated out into the night air. An army sprang into existence, as it were, from the ground, composed of workmen, unlike any other workmen, looking for the most part like grooms and chauffeurs out of place, but smart, alert and singularly quick upon their feet. All of them seemed able to turn a somersault, saddle a horse, or swarm up a rope ladder, as well as a smart seaman in an old China tea clipper, when he ran aloft into a top, over the futtock shrouds. Babel itself, when Jahwe, out of jealousy of man set confusion on the tongue of men, was not more polyglot. Russian, American, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Arabic, German, and Czechoslovak jostled one another in their mouths. None spoke the others' language properly, but everyone knew the word for horse, rope,

saddle, dance, sawdust, knot, slack or tight wire, handspring and elephant, in the others' tongue. For ordinary purposes, they had formed a lingua franca, out of the various elements of speech of all the languages, shotted with oaths and with indecencies, that worn as smooth as pebbles in the current of their speech had become merely adjectives.

These heterogeneous good companions, for no one better merited the term, like ants, set at once busily to work, under the blue glare of the electric light, that as by magic, others of the band had installed on what an hour ago was a mere sandy waste.

Long tents, to serve as stables, grew up like mushrooms, leaving a vacant space, where the great tent should rise. To them, men in trousers of a horsy cut, or breeches unbuttoned at the knees, muffled in greatcoats with woollen comforters up to their ears, covering their gipsy-looking greasy hair, for far Multan had sent its quota to the kaleidoscopic host, led horses that stepped as quietly and unconcernedly as if the planks down which they walked had been green fields, those fields that they would see no more, for once a circus horse

their lot is fixed as the fixed stars.

Piebalds, roans, chestnuts, sorrels, duns, skewbalds, creams with black points, steel-greys, and whites of every shade from purest snow to honey-coloured and that palest shade of cream, known in the Argentine as Duck's Egg, formed an equine flower-bed.

Chiron himself when seated underneath a spreading oak in Thessaly—he chose the finest of the mares to blend with the most beautiful of the young men to form the Centaur, that flight of man's imagination, that for once has outgone nature—could not have found better material to his hand. The equine race of the whole world had furnished representatives, from Shetland ponies up to the heavy Mecklenburger, with his round back, fit to count money on, and his stout legs, that do not seem to feel the strain when six or seven riders poise and caper on him as he canters round the ring. Yukers from the Hungarian puzta, with their fine limbs, light bone and saddle backs, as if nature herself had formed them for the circus, intelligent and docile, their long and flowing manes and tails, full gentle eyes and open nostrils giving them the look of an Arabian

steed designed in tapestry upon a banner screen in a Victorian house. In a long line they stepped out of their boxes, as delicately as Agag, with that look of comprehension and disdain performing animals all acquire, as if they felt the difference between an artist and a mere spectator, lolling in his stall, with a fat paunch and well-filled pocket-book.

After the horses had disappeared into their stables, a drove of camels, herded by Algerians, or Moroccans, but perhaps best described as "natives," for in what lone Duar, or in what black tent of camels' hair they had first heard the call to prayers, only themselves and Allah could pronounce with certainty.

Dressed in brown jellabas, or dingy white burnouses, they yet preserved entire their racial look, that almost all the other members of the troupe had shed when they took on their circensian nationality.

When the lions, tigers, seals and all the other wild beasts that made the now rapidly growing canvas town look as if Noah's Ark was delivering her cargo on Mount Ararat, had been caged, slowly the elephant appeared, with the look of peculiar cunning in his little porcine

eyes that makes him only just inferior to mankind, as to intelligence, although perhaps superior in bonhomie. He seemed to feel the dignity of his position as a survivor of a prehistoric world. All the time that the animals were being settled in their stables, the work went on, but silently, so that when a great canvas dome slowly was hoisted into position in the middle of the waste piece of ground, it seemed to rise out of its own volition from the sand. Then and then only was the noise of hammers heard, as a platoon of men drove home great iron tent pegs, to tauten up the ropes.

Around the ring they ranged the padded barrier, fencing in its thirteen paces of diameter, that sacramental measurement in which horses and men perform in circuses, all the world over, whether in the centre of great cities or in a field outside a village, in rural England, Poland, or Hungary. Seats, boxes, and electric lights, the high trapezes swinging from the roof, appeared to have been always just where the efficient squads of workers had placed them only half an hour before.

By daybreak all was ready for the next day's

performance, and when the ring-master, wrapped in an old, white box-cloth greatcoat with huge bone buttons, and a woollen comforter round his neck, looked at the work, and said, like the great ring-master in Eden, "that it was good," a hoot on an electric whistle summoned all hands to breakfast in the dining tent.

In the real, or the unreal world, according to the point of view of those who live in, or outside, a circus, the false dawn had vanished, and the sun was rising over the mountains and the sea. A white mist hung upon the palm trees, magnifying and ennobling them, just as it does out in the desert, or in the tropic everglades, from whence they had originally been brought. The sun's first rays fell on the lateen sails of the fishing boats as they stole out from every little village port and launched into the sea. From them there came the muffled sounds of oars, of cordage creaking in the old-time wooden blocks, as the great yard, that Latin yard, common to all the boats that sail the Latin sea was hoisted into place. Such yards, and ships not much unlike the fishing boats that now began to feel the morning breeze, the

ships of Agamemnon and Ulysses, must have borne when Helen's smile launched them upon the siege of Troy. The fishing boats, their pointed sails giving them an air as of a flight of seabirds, sank by degrees below the horizon, as silently as gulls disappear into the haze, before the eye of man can mark their disappearance. Shoreward, the rippling waves lapped on the pebbly beaches, with a scrunching sound as of the cat-ice crackling on the edges of a pond.

The ragged mountains, dotted with villages grouped round their church, the houses sheltering about it, as it were for protection from the modern world, just caught the morning sun. The panorama, fantastic and unreal, with the white houses of the coastal towns, the imported vegetation, and their look of unreality, seemed designed as an ideal background for the great dome of canvas that billowed gently, shivering a little in the light sea breeze, just as a jellyfish thrown up by the sea shivers upon the sand.

All was in order, by the hour advertised. A van with windows cut at intervals, behind which sat well-dressed girls, as quiet and

orderly as typists in a city office, served as the box-office. All seemed as permanent as if the dome of canvas had been the dome of a cathedral, stone-built and pointed, designed to last for centuries. Nothing about it gave an air of instability, but set one thinking that in a fleeting world, where all is changing (but as invisibly as the hands move upon a clock), canvas is the most fit material to build with, for those whose lives are after all passed in a circus, where they perform, even with less volition of their own than the trained animals, and pass away as the smoke of a cigarette dissolves into the air.

Bands blared, and men standing before the side-shows shouted the charms of the bearded lady, pig with five legs, the human skeleton, and the fat woman from Trebizond, certain of custom, for mankind unaware of its own freakishness, delights in abnormalities, seeing in them perhaps, something they can wonder at, despise, and patronize, and leave the tent amused and comforted by their superiority.

A continuous stream of people passed the wicket gate where stood the gigantic negro in a green uniform, with that grin upon his face

that makes the people of his race quite as inscrutable as the most enigmatic Japanese or Chinaman. Packed close as sardines in a barrel, the audience had that air of expectation that circus audiences must have manifested since the time of the Romans and the Greeks.

In the reserved seats sat a few tourists, some beautifully dressed in plus-fours, that costume tailors have designed as in derision of humanity. The well-known smell of tan, of horses' urine and of orange peel, with all the various scents, human and those compounded by perfumers, that every audience in the world throws off, luckily unknown to itself, hung in the air, in spite of all the efforts of smartly-dressed attendants, who wielded sprinklers with disinfectants.

Gone were the days when everything was dingy, the coats of horses staring, the performers' dresses dirty or ill-washed. All was as spick and span as in a West-End theatre. Smart girls in velvet coats of Georgian cut, flowered waistcoats, knee-breeches and silk stockings, high-heeled shoes, leaving a train of scent in passing, sold programmes and showed people to their seats, with an air fit for any

court, or at least such courts as those of Monaco and Gerolstein. The seats, the boxes and the ring itself were models of neatness and of cleanliness, and that, although the circus had been upon the road for months, travelling in Asia Minor and in Turkey, and only meant to spend three days where they had pitched their tents, and take the road again.

Into the arena bounded a Hungarian horse "en liberté," dark chestnut, with white stockings and a blaze down its face that made it "drink in white," as the Brazilians say.

Coursing round the ring, it seemed to cover miles, although the whole circumference was but a hundred feet. At a sign from the ringmaster, who, dressed in evening clothes, his chambrière with the lash lying on the ground, the fiery courser of the desert (see the handbills) stopped and reversed its course. Then, rising on its hind legs, it fought the air before the whirling lash that never touched it, and following its trainer, to the opening in the barrier, bounded back to its stables, passing through the ranks of the attendants, in their green uniforms, who clapped it on the quarters as it passed.

Men and girls rode, springing from the ground on to their horses' backs as agilely as gauchos. They faced the tail, balanced themselves on one another's shoulders, straddled their horses' necks, and passed beneath their bellies coming up on the other side, vaulted over the hind quarters, were dragged round the arena holding to the tail, whilst all the time the docile animals galloped like clockwork, as if they knew their riders' limbs were in their care, and that as much depended on them as on the men and women in their partnership.

A Caucasian horseman galloped into the ring. About the middle height, handsome and as "wonderly deliver" as was the Knight of the Canterbury Tales, the Caucasian dress suited him to perfection. The long green, fur-trimmed coat, set with its silver cartridge cases on the breast, clung to a waist as slender as a girl's, the red, soft, heelless riding boots, that eastern horsemen all affect, were home into the stirrups, that with their short leathers did not allow the feet to come below the belly, and gave the rider the appearance of standing upright on his horse, in the big peaked Cossack

saddle with its pads, like footballs, that support the thighs. You saw at once that he was a Gigit, trained to the tricks of the best school of Gigitofka, in Vladikafkas, or some other mountain town in the recesses of the frosty Caucasus. His Persian lambswool cap, set off his bold and sun-browned features, leaving a few tight curls below it, on his forehead. His light and cutting snaffle bridle, with its thin red reins, he held high, in his left hand, to give a better purchase on the palate, for the Caucasian horsemen use no curb. Holding one hand above his head, his nagaika dangling from his forefinger, he rushed into the arena checking his Anglo-Arab in the centre of the ring, where it stood, turned to stone, for half a second, before he wheeled it once again into full speed. Rising in his short stirrups he stood erect upon the saddle, and then letting himself fall trailed round the ring with his head just brushing on the sand. Agile as a cat, he swung himself again into his seat, threw down a handkerchief, retrieved it from the saddle, with a "back pick-up," and riding gently round the ring, amid thunders of applause, saluted gravely with his hand

touching his lambswool cap.

The women looked at him, as if he were a cake in a confectioners, devouring him in anticipation with their eyes. Some said he was a prince in his own country, which may have been the case, for certainly he looked a prince upon his horse. Well did Cervantes say that riding makes some men appear like grooms, others like princes.

Next appeared a troupe of Chinese acrobats; modern Chinese without their pigtails, who had travelled the world over and spoke every language, and yet the instant that they set saucers spinning on a long slender cane, or piled a line of rods on one another, striking away the lowest of the pile and deftly catching the topmost rod upon one finger-point, became as Oriental and inscrutable as if they had never left their native country for an hour. Even in the circus ring they seemed to represent a culture that had existed centuries before Europe had emerged from barbarism.

More graceful if less powerful than their Western brethren, who with their great muscles looked a little crude beside them, they seemed as if their feats were an hieratic ritual

from an older world, rather than circus tricks. On her bay thoroughbred, with patterns traced upon its quarters with dandy brush and water, his coat so bright and shining that a man could shave by it, the lady of the Haute Ecole rode gracefully into the ring. Seated in her white buckskin saddle, she held her reins so lightly that they scarcely seemed to move, but with a grip as strong as steel. The smartly fitting habit showed her well-cut patent-leather boot, set off with a bright spur. Holding her long Haute Ecole whip in her right hand, she touched her horse upon the shoulder gently, putting him through all the airs of the manège, the Spanish Walk, the Passage, Volte and Semivolte, making him shift his croup, change feet with his hind legs, rear, plunge, and finally kneel down, whilst she leaned back in the saddle easily, smiling her thanks to the delighted audience. The ring-master, advancing, held her horse as she dismounted at a bound, and bowing to the audience, retired, executing two or three of those little skips without which no feminine performer in a circus ever leaves the ring. Demos must have his jesters just as in older

ages emperors and kings kept private fools at courts. In this age of mass production the clowns who have replaced, or perhaps merely succeeded, the jesters of an older world, for nothing changes in man's mental atmosphere, tumbled by platoons into the ring. Their antics, quips, quiddities, and cranks fell rather flat on a French public, too civilised and not attuned to "le gros rire" that so delights a British audience. Perhaps the national lack of bonhomie accounts for it to some extent, but certainly jokes that set audiences in other countries hilarious with delight, were received rather coldly, much in the way one listens to the club bore with his well-worn and pointless platitudes.

One turn and only one the clowns apparently held in reserve for all eventualities fairly brought down the house, and dissipated the air of cold reserve and condescension that their first efforts had not availed to thaw.

Dressed as a comic Spanish bull-fighter, mimicking the airs of a Matamoros that bull-fighters affect, hollowing his back and strutting, whilst he held his wooden sword in the approved position, over the red cloak doubled on

his left arm, a tall thin clown advanced into the ring. Stopping before a pretty girl, perhaps placed there by the ring-master in the same way that company promoters get a mine "salted" before they give the public the privilege of purchasing their shares, he laid his hand upon his heart, made a mock heroic speech, and with the appropriate gesture flung his "montera" on the ground. Then from the entrance rushed in a great dog, equipped with horns, and hunted him after a few ineffectual passes, all round the ring. Dropping his wooden sword and all his airs of a Torero, the clown rushed about in unavailing efforts to escape the onslaughts of the "bull." At last he fairly fled before his adversary, who seized him by the collar of his jacket, and was borne out struggling, behind the scenes. Then for the first time the audience gave itself up to the magnetism that once started surely affects a crowd, and laughed till tears ran down the rough faces of the peasants from the villages and made respectable and well-dressed bourgeois shake their fat sides with laughter, and wipe their glasses as they leaned back in their seats, vanquished by that one touch of folly that makes the whole world

kin. No circus is complete nowadays without its "drug store" cowboys to spin a rope and ride a horse trained to plunge three or four times, without putting up its back, that the audience takes to be a buckjumper. They may or may not have been real cowpunchers, once upon a time, but generally come from some western cow-town, where they have learned to lasso in the local stockyards and corrals. They wore silk shirts, wristlets of patent leather, and round their necks gaudy silk handkerchiefs, artistically knotted, that fell upon their shoulders in two points, forming what is called a golilla by the Mexicans, though the word, no doubt brought over by the Conquistadores, really means a ruff. Their loose rather low riding boots, slashed in the front with red and yellow leather, were stuffed into their trousers, cut tightly, such as the Mexicans affect. Each of them carried a well-coiled lasso in his hands. With wonderful dexterity, they spun their lassos, forming the loop so quickly it seemed a living thing that grew beneath their hands. Gradually it circled up and down, rising and falling round the body of the lassoer, who jumped through the loop, threw

a back somersault, lay down and rose again, till finally the fifty feet of the long heavy rope, in a vast ring, was whirling in the air. The other youth spun a rope in each hand, keeping a short cord spinning in his teeth. He cracked a stockwhip, cutting a piece of paper from his companion's hands, at ten or twelve feet off, a feat that would have cost a finger-joint to the man who held the piece of paper, had the lash fallen upon it.

Then a man stood against a shutter, with his arms extended, and the two youths outlined his figure on the boards with butchers' knives, thrown with such force they quivered in the wood.

Nothing appeared to interest the audience so much, for it was something anyone could understand, with the additional element of danger to another's life, so dear to those who pass their own removed from any risk. For the first time, the faces of the youths took on a grave expression, and as they drew the knives out of the shutter, one whispered something to the other, who, glancing for a moment over his shoulder, smiled and spat upon the ground. Then came the turn that showed the difference

between circus tricks, however dexterous, and roping on a ranch. In the one case a man depends upon himself, and as a juggler by continual practice performs feats that appear incredible, so does the circus lasso expert make a rope seem almost living in his deft hands. Upon a ranch, or even in a circus, to rope animals is quite another matter, for it is impossible to train a horse into co-operation with the man who wields the rope. All that can be done by the best trainer in the world is to ensure that the horse gallops evenly and does not flinch when the man makes his cast. The knife throwing over, and the trained buckjumper duly ridden, a man in chaparreras, a word the cowpunchers have changed to "chaps," wearing a ten-gallon hat, and all the rest of the indumentaria of his calling, rode into the ring. He put his horse into a slow canter, bearing a little on the bit to make him raise his forehand, whilst the roper, watching his opportunity, stood by to throw and catch the horse by the front feet. He dwelt a little long upon his aim, perhaps through over-care, and as he threw, his cast was just a fraction of a second late, and struck the horse's legs as they touched ground,

instead of circling them when in the air. The rope came back into his hand, like a snake recoils upon itself if it has missed its spring—a most annoying thing to happen to a man who knows that he knows how to rope, but that occasionally occurs to the best cattlemen.

His companion muttered something to him that made him frown, and gathering up his lasso after a sign to the man upon the horse, he poised himself again to throw his rope.

This time he tried to do the feat a little differently. Instead of aiming at the forelegs, when in the air, he threw the loop in front of them, intending that the horse should step into the noose, and with a deft twist of his wrist to pull it up upon the legs. Again he was a trifle soon, and only caught one foot, an ugly throw that pulls the limb out in an ungainly position, and in the case of a wild animal, may cause an accident.

The audience not knowing anything about such matters cheered vociferously. Honour was saved, and the two youths retired, dragging their legs a little, with the gait, real or assumed, of men who pass their lives trailing

great spurs upon their feet.

No one can tell why the European who generally acts as a mahout to a trained elephant should always be got up as a French explorer in an old-fashioned book of travels, in spotless white, with a sun helmet on his head. Yet so it is, and as the elephant is a discerning animal, it may be that he would not perform if his mahout adopted any other costume. Elephants have performed in circuses ever since the times of ancient Rome, when they walked upon the tight rope, danced, fought in the arena, and perhaps now and then knelt on a Christian, when Nero was in search of novelty.

Educated, or rather civilised spectators—the two states are not identical—must always look with compassion on a performing elephant. Certainly he is not overworked, but somehow he strikes one as though he would be more in his own element piling great logs into position in a teak forest in Burmah, or helping to make roads in Southern India.

To see the monster, with his intelligence, and his docility, so careful not to hurt any of the pygmies, fussing about him, is a sad sight, and

sympathy goes out to the elephant. When the mahout orders him to lie down, it is as if the dignity of man, a dignity, if he is worthy of it, that he should share with all the animals, is being outraged. Standing on a tub, it is as if a valued friend was put into the pillory for fools to gape at. When the mahout swings himself upon his head by one of his tremendous ears, and strikes an attitude as if he were defying the stage thunder, it shows at once that there must be some kind of partnership between the man and the huge animal.

But when the trainer makes him stand up, balancing himself on his forelegs, it is a sight as sorry as it would be to see a learned judge, duly bewigged and robed, after delivering his judgment in an important case, turn round and elevate his worshipful posterior in the air for the inspection of the people seated in the court. He waddled off, with his mahout cracking a whip, to stand and muse perhaps in his own quarters on the strange ways of men, or to be wrapped in the contemplation of his travels from the time when, as a calf, he first set out, following his mother, to be a wanderer upon the road. The pity of it is that he cannot write

memoirs, for if he could, how many things he might be able to impart about ourselves, that have escaped our eyes!

The cruel spectacle over, cruel, that is, to those who feel that elephants were not intended to be clowns, for without doubt his trainer loved him as the apple of his eye, addressing him in private life as "mon vieux," "old fellow," or "viejito," according to his nationality, and would have braved the flames to save him had the circus taken fire, four bay horses trotted into the ring.

Standing in the centre of the arena, much in the way a hostess in an embassy stands to receive her guests, the ring-master, in immaculate dress-clothes, stood to receive them on their entry. They bowed their heads, pawed gently with their near forefeet, and waited his commands. All were in high condition, with their coats shining, as bright as a horse-chestnut, when in the autumn it falls and bursts its covering on the green moss beneath the trees; their eyes were bright, their manes and tails well combed and dandy-brushed, their feet polished like new cricket-balls, and all were so alike that the best ranchman accustomed to

pick out a single horse from amongst hundreds running in a corral might have been puzzled to say which, in the language of his craft, was which, and which the other of them.

At a sign from the ring-master, they ranged themselves like soldiers, and cantered round the ring, and as they passed the opening to the stables, four greys joined them, and then four chestnuts, and four blacks. All were as well matched and as well turned out as the first four, and as they galloped they went so evenly and were in such condition that you might have counted money on their backs without a single piece of it falling to the ground. They wheeled and stopped, changed front, and strung out into a long line, put their feet on the barrier, and came back again into their formation, like well-regulated clockwork. All seemed to take a pride in their own beauty, and a pleasure in their work, and now and then in passing, nipped at each other playfully, or threw up their heels as they fell into line.

Taking their trainer as a pivot, at a walk they formed a cartwheel and revolved slowly, the various colours serving as the spokes.

Lastly the trainer raised his chambrière and

whirling it about before their noses, they rose on their hind legs, fighting the air with their forefeet, so close to him that he seemed to disappear, lost in the thicket of their flowing manes and tails, with their feet flashing round his head.

He lowered his whip, and forming fours again, they trotted off, each four waiting decorously till it received the signal to advance towards the opening. Then the attendants raked the ring where the horses' feet had churned it up, till it looked like a little sand-hill in the desert, after a troup of camels has passed over it. As one of them unhooked the rope-ladder that dangled from the roof, all heads were turned towards a little platform at the end of the tight wire that stretched high above the ring. Balancing poles were fastened to it, and a white wooden chair. From the back there appeared three figures wrapped in great-coats, whom hardly anyone had seen enter, as everyone had his eyes fixed upon the wire. "The Perestrello Family, the greatest wire-walkers the world has ever seen, renowned for their amazing feats, that have called forth the admiration of all beholders in both hemis-

pheres," so said the programme, now advanced, shedding their wrappers, to where the ladder hung.

A hum of admiration greeted them when they stood ready to perform, for Latin audiences have never lost their love of beauty in the human form, that has come down to them from their ancestors in Rome, who in their turn received it from the Greeks.

Just for an instant the trio remained motionless, feeling the pride instinctively of their appearance, just as a fine horse appears to feel and to rejoice in his condition, and as unconsciously. With his arms thrown round his children's waists the father looked at them with that air of love and of possession that a fond father feels in something that he has given life to. In this case not only had he given life, but doubly created, by his care in training up to physical perfection those copies of himself.

Not more than five-and-forty years of age, and about five-feet-eight in height, the ideal stature for a perfect athlete of the ring, his crisp brown hair curled low upon his forehead, as the Greeks have depicted in their statues of Olympian victors. His muscles stood out on

his arms, but not so much as to amount to a deformity, as is so often seen in athletes who have sacrificed everything to strength but have forgotten symmetry. His neck, round, not too short, but strongly made, was set so well upon his trunk that it left hardly any hollow beneath the clavicle, and the whole man gave the appearance of great strength joined to activity.

His children seeming about nineteen and twenty were not unworthy of their progenitor, and looked like copies of their father, not drawn to scale, but executed by some artist who had seen at a glance all really essential to the picture.

The band that had blared out incessantly, discoursing tangos, jazz and patriotic tunes, the chief performer a stout negro, who on his terrific instrument, that may be best described as a mudhorn, from which no one but a member of his race seems able to extract anything but a metabolic rumbling, now ceased its fury.

A gentleman dressed in a morning coat, striped trousers, with white spats upon his patent-leather shoes, holding his tall hat in his left hand, now begged the audience to refrain from their applause during the Perestrellos'

act, for he explained the slightest slip upon the wire would of necessity be fatal, for they performed without a net.

Nothing could possibly have been more pleasing to the audience, who in the way of audiences all the world over, hoped inwardly that it would be their luck to witness one of those accidents that it reads of in the Press, with so much gusto.

The girl, putting her foot into a loop, was run up lightly to the platform at one end of the wire, holding with one hand to the rope and with the other blowing kisses to the audience, as she swung through the air.

Bounding upon the platform with a skip or two, she grasped the chain supporting it and looked down upon the upturned faces, confident, youthful, and as unconscious as is a butterfly when it alights upon a flower. Her brother followed her, running up the ladder as easily as if he had been walking up a stair, his feet finding the rungs almost instinctively, as surely as in Colombia a red howling monkey passes from tree to tree. The father followed his two children, and then the girl, seizing her long white balancing pole, tripped across the

wire with so much confidence that one forgot to be afraid. She turned and tripped back to the middle of the wire. Her brother joined her, and they passed one another by a miracle of equilibrium. The father, lightly as his children, ran to the centre of the ring, pretended to make a false step and fall, sat down upon the wire, rose again upon one foot, executing all his feats so easily and with such grace that the whole tent rang with applause.

Balancing a wooden chair upon the wire, the elder Perestrello seated himself upon it, looking as secure as if he had been seated in a well-padded armchair in the window of a club. His son climbed on his shoulders, sat with his legs round his father's neck, drew out a cigarette from his waistband, lighted it and smoked a puff or two, sending the smoke out in a cloud from both his nostrils, and then tossed the stump negligently into the ring. Most people would have thought that they had done enough, and put their lives in peril sufficiently to please even the most avid thrillmonger. With infinite precaution, placing her feet as carefully as a steeple-jack picks his way up a tall chimney on a windy afternoon, the girl

climbed like a fly upon a window-pane, so little did her feet appear to move, upon the chair, and from the back of it, on to her brother's shoulders, where she stood upright, waving a little flag. The audience held their breath, as if it were afraid to add any additional vibration to the air. Rough fishermen and peasants held their hands before their eyes, women caught tightly at the arms of those who sat beside them; the well-fed bourgeoisie were frozen in their chairs, and even those who never took their gaze off the performers had a strained look, such as you see come over sailors' faces after a close call. At last the Perestrello Family slid down the ladders to the ground. They did not skip in answer to the applause, but bowed and stood for a moment, the father's arms about the children's necks as if he recognised, that once more they were safe.

With a wild cry a troupe of Arab tumblers bounded in for the last turn. The Chinese had presented types of an old civilisation, long anterior to ours, the Perestrello Family, the poetry of the circus, but the wild-looking Arabs had a charm peculiarly their own. Probably they came from Si Hamed O'Musa in the Sus, that

ancient Hollywood of Arab acrobatism that furnishes troupes of Arab tumblers to every circus in the world. Half Arab and half Berber, nothing can ever really civilise them, and though so many of them have performed in London, Paris, New York and Berlin, and speak French, German, English or what not, with perfect fluency, sometimes even marrying European wives, there are but few of them who on their holidays do not go back to the Sus, cast off their European clothes, and enjoy a sun bath of barbarism.

So lithe and active were the younger members of the troupe, so wild and flowing their great mops of hair, that it was difficult to tell which of the whirling figures, bounding and turning catherine-wheels and somersaults upon the sand, was a boy or a girl, or if there was an intermediate india-rubber sex, born in the Sus, to tumble through the world.

The elder men had the grave look that years advancing give to all Arabs, when they begin to think of Allah and interlard their speech with pious phrases. This does not take away the racial characteristic of being able to pass out of repose into the wildest ecstasies of fury. The

grave and handsome elder members of the troupe, who had stood quietly whilst the boys and girls performed, occasionally encouraging them with a shrill cry, harsh as a seagull's, suddenly became animated.

Bounding across the ring, leaping and somersaulting so quickly that the eye had as much difficulty in making out their limbs as if they had been spokes of some great swift revolving wheel, they fairly outdid all the younger members of the troupe. Such leaps and such contortions, such quickness on the feet, such self-abandonment, only could be seen from those who in the zowia of Si Hamed pay homage to the saint of acrobats. With a loud cry they left the arena, some of them shaking out the sand from their long hair.

The show was over, and the audience filed out, just before midnight, as orderly and with as great decorum as if they had been coming out of church. Almost before the last of them had left the circus, workmen began to pull down everything. The dome of canvas that had appeared so permanent and as if designed to last a century, fluttered down like a gigantic moth, and men began to fold it, almost before

it had ceased fluttering.

Men who but half an hour before had been models of grace and of activity, now moved about in heavy greatcoats, smoking cigarettes. Women, their hair untidy and their faces hardly streaked with the grease-paint of their make-up, flitted from caravan to caravan, or stood chattering in groups. By daybreak all was ready for the road. Nothing remained on the bare space of ground, upon the outskirts of the town, of all that microcosm of human life, its dangers, beauties, disillusions, loves, hatreds, and jealousies. Nothing was left to mark the passage of the great town of canvas that had arisen in a night, fallen in an hour and passed away, like life—nothing, except a ring upon the sand.

# TSCHIFFELY'S RIDE

TSCHIFFELY*, Mancha and Gato. The three names are as indivisible as the three Persons of the Trinity.

They will go down to history in the Argentine with far more certainty than those of many worthy politicians, gold-laced generals, diplomats, and others who have strutted their brief hour upon the stage of the republic.

Tschiffely in his various letters to the Press during his three years' journey from Buenos Aires to New York, reveals his sympathetic personality.

Writing from Washington, on April 26th, 1928, to "La Asociacion Militar de Retirados del Ejercito y Armada," Buenos Aires, he signs, "Tschiffely, Mancha y Gato." On other occasions he says, "remembrances and neighs, from the horses."

Tschiffely, a Swiss long settled in the Argentine, a famous horseman, is a man of iron resolution and infinite resource, as his great feat, perhaps the greatest that man and horses have

*I did not know Tschiffely when I wrote this sketch, taking my information from Argentine papers and magazines.

performed in all the history of the world, is there to show.

As to the horses, their deeds speak better for them than any words.

For the last fifty years, it has been the ambition of most stock-breeders in the Argentine to "improve" the native breed of horse, and above all to add a cubit to his stature by taking thought.

They took the thought, and certainly added a cubit (read "hand") to the native horses' height. Nature, however, had her eye upon their work. By crossing with the thoroughbred, the Arab, the Pecheron, the Cleveland Bay and other strains, they bred a taller horse, faster, and fitter both for polo and parade. But strange as it may sound, polo is not the only thing for which horses are designed. It soon was found that the half-bred (mestizo) horse, though larger, faster, and stronger, was a soft animal unfit for work with cattle, slow to jump off the mark, clumsy in turning. . . . At this point, I hear my polo players exclaim, "How can a polo pony be called clumsy at turning round?" True that on a well-levelled polo ground, rolled, watered, and treated almost as

a lawn, he lumbers round quite readily. But polo players ride for pleasure, their horses are fed and pampered, almost like "Christians." I use the word, not in the religious, but the Spanish sense.

All that can happen to their riders is a collision, a sudden fall or something of the kind. Most polo players die in their beds, with doctors in attendance, and with the Sacraments of Mother Church, after an old age of drinking cocktails in the club, talking of lip-straps, curbs, martingales, bog and blood spavins, splints and other matters of their mystery. The cattleman rides for his daily bread. His horse eats grass, and he himself, as did "Sir Percivell" (in *The Rhyme of Sir Thopas*), sleeps in his hood (read "poncho") and when on the road drinks, if not "water of the well," the coffee-coloured fluid of some "charco" or "arroyo" of the plains. The cattle peon plunges into a sea of wild-eyed longhorns, or light-footed Hereford, where a false touch upon the reins means a wound; a fall means death. He rides swinging his lazo, over the roughest ground, and that upon a horse that perhaps has not tasted food or water since sunrise, and then, work over, has

to march behind a troop of cattle, and sleep tied to a stake, upon the Pampa, in an icy winter's night, or in a scorching north wind that shrivels up the grass. Gradually it dawned upon cattlemen that the half-bred was an inferior animal for such work. He was slow to turn, proved a poor weight-carrier, was unsafe when galloping in rough ground, and a cold night or two, without his blanket and his corn, made a poor horse of him indeed.

So they turned back to nature, and procured some horses of the old native stock from El Cacique Liompichon, an Indian chief in Patagonia, and started the Criollo (native) stud book, for the native horse. It was found fourteen-two or fourteen-three was the best height for work, for taller horses, even of pure native stock, were not so fit to stand long days, short commons and hard work.

Then they set about to put their theories into practice and show the world the wonderful endurance of the Criollo horse. Now it was that the famous trio, Tschiffely, Mancha and Gato, came upon the scene.

As soon as the "Asociacion Criadores de Criollo," with its stud book, was instituted, long

distance rides were undertaken, to show what the Criollo horse could do. Don Abelardo Piovano, on his horse, Lunarejo Cardal, covered the distance of eight hundred and fifty-seven miles in seventeen days, from Buenos Aires to Mendoza, carrying about thirteen stone.

This was no ride round some great stadium, with grooms always in attendance with water and with corn, rubbers and bandages, and a warm stable every night. The route ran over open plains, sparsely inhabited, where the intrepid pair often slept out alone beneath the stars, the horse tied to a stake-rope cropping the grass, the rider eating such spare provisions as could be carried in his saddle-bags.

The feat was good, in all the circumstances, but not definitive, for it was carried out on the flat plains, in which the horse was born, with little change of climate, and with good grass and water all the way, and corn occasionally.

How, when or wherefore it came into Tschiffely's head to announce his raid from Buenos Aires to New York is to me as unknown as most of the designs of fate.

Immediately the local Babbitry gave tongue.

Old babblers and young bletherers rushed into print to show it was impossible. Just as in Salamanca, when the wise reverend fools proved mathematically and theologically that Columbus was a madman, so did the local wiseacres demonstrate Tschiffely was an ass. No horses, so they said, bred in the plains, almost at sea-level, could cross the Andes, still less endure the Tropics, or bear the constant change of climate and of food upon the road. Indians and bandits would attack the rider; wild beasts destroy the horses; their feet would give out on the stony mountain roads. In fact the project was absurd and would bring ridicule upon the country. Tschiffely took no notice of the arm-chair riders and quietly went on with his few preparations for the start. They were soon made, and he proceeded to the south, where the most hardy animals are bred, to choose the horses that became national heroes. He selected two, "Mancha," a skewbald, with white legs and face, and streaked all over with white stripes, stocky and with well-made legs and feet, like those of a male mule, as hard as steel. His second choice was "Gato," a yellow dun, for "gato" is a

contraction of the word "gateado" (literally, cat-coloured), the favourite colour of the Gauchos of the plains, who always used to choose that colour for hard work. They have a saying, "Gateado, antes muerto que cansado," a dun horse dies before he tires.

Azara, the Spanish naturalist, writing in 1785 (?), says that the great troops of wild horses, known as Baguales, that in his time roamed all over the Pampas, from San Luis to Patagonia, were nearly all either some shade of dun or brown. "Mancha" was fifteen years of age, and "Gato" fourteen, and neither of them had ever eaten corn or worn a shoe.

The horses had just finished a journey of nine hundred miles, taking a troop of cattle from Sarmiento, far below the Welch settlement of Chibut, to Ayacucho in the province of Buenos Aires, in the month of March.

One road and only one was open to him, across the plains to Mendoza, then over the Andes and along the coast of Chile and Peru, from Ecuador to Colombia and through Panama to Nicaragua and on to Mexico.

Once there, Tschiffely knew, all would be easy and the victory assured, for Mexico pre-

sented no essential difficulty with its great open plains, and with a population that adored the horse, almost as much as do the Argentines.

Tschiffely set out from Buenos Aires in April, 1925, riding his Mancha and leading Gato with a pack-saddle carrying his food and clothes. Hardly had he started than he encountered torrential rains that turned the "camps" into a morass. He reached Rosario, with his horses fresh, finishing his first "étape."

The local know-alls found the horses "extremely weak and thin." This pleased them-without doubt, but Dr. Nicholas L. Duro, the veterinary surgeon, saw them with different eyes. After examination he pronounced both horses "in good condition and able to proceed upon their march." In a letter to the local press he said: "It is astonishing that animals of the appearance of these horses, selected for such a journey, and in such disadvantageous conditions, in regard to food, for neither of them has yet learned to eat corn, not only have adapted themselves to the diversity of climate (Rosario is hotter far than Patagonia) but have improved upon the road."

The next eighty leagues were chiefly heavy

sand, the water brackish (such water generally purges horses) and the grasses often poisonous, so that the utmost care had to be taken where the horses fed. They crossed the prairies of Santiago del Estero and of Tucuman, and on the twenty-sixth of June arrived at the Bolivian frontier at Perico del Carmen, in the province of Jujuy, having covered twelve hundred miles (400 leagues).

In Tucuman, the curiosity to see the horses and their rider was immense. Somehow or other Mancha's fame as a buck-jumper ("tenia fama de reservado") had preceded him. The officers of the garrison, much against Tschiffely's will, persuaded him to let a soldier, known as a rider, mount the horse. He clapped the spurs into him ("lo buscó"), and then the man, being, in Tschiffely's words, "a dud at the business," after three bucks was thrown into the dirt ("lo basurió"), before the eyes of the whole regiment—not bad work for a grass-fed horse that had just completed more than a thousand miles!

As far as the Bolivian frontier all had been relatively plain sailing for the trio. Although the distance traversed had been great, the

horses had been in climates not too widely different from their own. They had not had to swim considerable rivers, and grass and water had been plentiful.

In front of them there lay a Via Crucis.

As they came through the grassy plains, camped underneath the stars by the side of some slow-flowing "arroyo" of the Pampas, Tschiffely, after staking out the horses carefully, would lay down the various pieces of the native saddle ("el recaó"), heat water for his "maté" at a little fire, eat what he had in his saddle-bags and sit smoking, drinking a "maté" or two, and watching the horses eat. When he felt drowsy, he would take a last look at the horses, examine carefully the knot of the stake-rope, look well to the picket-pin, or the bunch of grass if the ground was too hard to drive a pin into, and then lie down with his face in the direction of the way he had to travel at the first streak of dawn.

Leaning upon his elbow he would listen to the mysterious noises of the night, the bark of the Vizcachas, the grunting noise of the burrowing Tuco-tucos, and the shrill neigh of a wild stallion gathering up his mares.

After having taken off his boots, his knife and his revolver ready to his hand, beneath his head, he would draw up his poncho to protect him from the dew. During the night he would rise frequently to make sure the horses were all right. Each time he rose he would look up and mark the constellations as they moved, the Pleiades, Capella and the Southern Cross, with an especial glance at the Tail of Orion, with its three bright stars, the Gauchos used to call "Las Tres Marias." At the false dawn he would awake, shivering and drenched with dew, revive his fire, drink several "matés," and see his horses, half-dozing on their stake-ropes, resting a hind leg, and with their coats dripping and shiny with the dew. Then he would saddle up, taking care not to draw the cinch too tightly if it was Mancha that he was to ride, remembering his fame as a born buck-jumper. Putting the pack-saddle on whichever of the horses was to serve that day as cargo bearer ("el carguero"), he would take the halter of the led horse in his right hand, gather up the reins, and mounting lightly, without dwelling for an instant on the stirrup, strike into the jog-trot called in the Argentine "el

trotecito," that eats the miles up with less fatigue to rider and horse than any other gait.

The difficulties lay in front. Probably at this point Tschiffely taught his horses to eat corn. He had to face the stony Andean roads, high altitudes, bitter mountain winds, snow, ice, and lack of pasture by the way. All these with horses born in the plains of Patagonia, accustomed to but little variations of temperature and perennial good grass.

Writing from La Quiaca, on the Bolivian frontier, on July 29th (1925), Tschiffely says, "The worst part of the road so far was that between Jujuy and La Quiaca." Sometimes his horses had to pass the night with seventeen and eighteen degrees of frost, without food, in the open tied up to a post, with winds that "penetrated to the bones." He says the horses were improving day by day, only he himself had suffered from a poisoned hand, due to a prick from a sharp thorn. His face, from the exposure to the sun and wind, was like "an English pudding." This reference to our national rice (or perhaps tapioca) "pudding" is scarcely worthy of a horseman of his stamp. In spite of all the prophecies that no

horse born on the plain could reach La Quiaca, "Here we are," he says, "the horses fatter than when we set out." His own condition seems to have been so bad that everyone in La Quiaca advised him to give up. "But," he says, "little did they know of the affection that I have to my two 'pingos,' the faithful sharers of so many weary leagues of solitude." "No, sir" (he is writing to Dr. Emilio Solanet, of Buenos Aires, the great horse-breeder), "I will not give up unless either I or my horses die. Good-bye now to the Argentine, regards to all who have accompanied me in their thoughts, with neighs from Mancha and Gato, and their remembrances to all. Yrs. Aimé Tschiffely."

A gallant and tender-hearted letter, that showed a man, brought up in the Swiss mountains, tempered and toughened to the consistency of jerked beef by sun and wind upon the plains, and with a heart of steel.

September saw him in La Paz, the capital of Bolivia, at an altitude of twelve thousand feet. His horses still were in the best of spirits, and he himself had got well of his poisoned hand, in the keen mountain air. The roads had been

abominable, snowy at times and always stony and precipitous. From Potosi to Curdo the mountain pass was fifteen thousand feet in height. His guide's mule completely petered out, though mountain-bred, accustomed to high altitudes, and man and mule had to be put aboard the first train, for they were completely "knock-out," as Tschiffely says. His horses plodded on, their rider walking occasionally in the worst bits of the road. During the journey in the mountains he had made generally about two-and-twenty miles a day. A mountain mule seldom makes more, upon an average.

The rider had hurt his leg in a fall on the road, and was suffering from malaria, the horses had been badly bitten by the vampire-bats, but otherwise were well.

La Paz turned out en masse to see the horses and their intrepid rider, and the local veterinary pronounced both Mancha and El Gateado "quite sound in wind and limb." Mancha was so fresh that he nearly kicked his box to pieces when they arrived in Lima and rested for a week or two. In three days they had come from the region of eternal snows into the hottest of the tropics. The trio had been five

months on the road, and of the three the rider had suffered most in health. The next stage, between Lima and Trujillo, was more terrible than any of the past.

To read Tschiffely's letter from Barranca (Peru), it seems impossible that even such valiant animals as Mancha and Gato could have survived the hardships of the road. The trail ran through the desert of Mata Caballos ("kill horses"), impossible to pass without a guide. No one was willing to risk his life on such a quest, for he was almost certain to "die in the demand," as goes the Spanish phrase. Full eighteen leagues (54 miles) had to be covered, in a sandy desert, before water could be reached, under a temperature of fifty-two degrees Centigrade, or say a hundred and ten Fahrenheit.

Tschiffely saddled up at half-past four and reached his water at half-past six at night. His description of the "étape" shows him with as light a hand upon the pen as on the reins.

"Sand, sand, and sun, lagoons with myriad of gulls, sand, rocks, and still more sand. Not a plant to be seen, no refuge from the sun that there is fire. To compare the region with the

Hell of Dante would be inexact, for nature there is dead; the landscape seems unreal. The horses' feet sank deep into the sand, a burning thirst consumed us. When we arrived at Huecho (where there was a well) the horses, although tired, were going well. My head was like an English 'budin' (this is a variant in spelling, not disagreeable to the eye), my face all the colours of the rainbow, with the skin fit to burst."

There he had to stay a little, for his guide and the mule he rode were quite "knock-out," a favourite phrase of his. As everyone at Huecho knew that the next stage was only possible at night, and to attempt it by day was almost certain failure, there was great difficulty to get a guide willing to undertake the task. Besides the risk of wandering from the right path, or perishing from heat, there was the additional danger, in the next two "étapes" of the dry river-courses swelling to broad torrents impossible to cross, by the sudden melting, up in the Andes, of the snow. This entailed the services of someone who knew the fords, for the unusual heat of the season, extraordinary even in that hell of burning sand,

had filled the watercourses a month before the time.

Not finding anyone in Huecho who would affront the perils of the trail, Tschiffely set out on a long tramp of seven leagues, on foot, to a hacienda, where lived a guide who knew the road. He was obliged to go on foot, for on the road there was one of those Andean swinging-rope bridges that no animal could cross. Having found a guide, who in a day or two arrived by a long detour that missed the bridge, riding a mule and leading a horse that carried bread and sardines, with water in four ample flasks. Thirty-two leagues of heavy sand, with neither water nor any food for man or beast, now lay before him. In seventeen hours of "sand and sand and sand" (I quote his letter to *La Nacion* of Buenos Aires, Feb. 16, 1926), almost without a halt, he reached a little Indian village called Huarney. The guide and his two animals were exhausted, but Mancha and El Gateado, when they were unsaddled, rolled in the sand and ate voraciously. Thirty leagues (90 miles) lay between Huarney and Casura, another Indian town. When he arrived at the Casura river it was in high

flood, and he was forced to swim. Riding his Gateado and leading Mancha, he plunged into the stream. Swept down the current he was almost drowned with both his horses. The cowardly guide, who after much persuasion tried the ford, did nothing to assist him and almost by a miracle they all reached the bank. That day they travelled twenty hours, with only one hour's rest, after the passage of the ford. His horses, as he wrote (to *La Nacion*), though tired, were not exhausted, but the guide and his horses were nearly dead. The sandy deserts now were passed, but perils of a different nature still lay before him on the road.

Once more he was obliged to plunge into the Andes, for no road ran along the coast to Panama. So he set off for Quito, having already passed by Cuzco, the other Inca capital, on his Andean journey from Bolivia to Peru. By this time notices of the "Raid" began to appear in every city of the Americas. The sporting circles of New York and Mexico received reports of Tschiffely's journey from every wireless station on the way. "Mancha" and "Gato" had become household words in every newspaper.

All unknown to himself, Tschiffely was entering on the most arduous and dangerous portion of his ride. The frost and snows of the high Andes, the burning heat of the coastal sands between Lima and Trujillo, the poisonous pasturage in Jujuy, were all as nothing to what he soon was called on to endure. At least in all the countries he had passed through there had been food for man and beast. Scanty at times, but still sufficient to sustain their strength; water, except between Lima and Trujillo, had never failed, and there had been no danger from wild beasts. Once he left Quito, at an altitude of ten thousand feet, straight from the coast, over the roughest mountain roads, he would be obliged to plunge into the forests of some of the hottest tropics of the world. Those forests swarming with vampire-bats, with every kind of noxious insect, full of dangerous snakes, cut by deep streams, the haunt of alligators and electric eels, with every shallow the abode of stinging rays, that if a horse treads on them, inflict a wound that causes agony and does not heal for months; peopled by shoals of the voracious little fish, the Piranha, that tears

to pieces every living thing that has the smallest open wound upon it, constituted an obstacle difficult and dangerous beyond belief. Their recesses sheltered tigers (jaguars) powerful enough to kill a horse with a blow of their paw and drag his body fifty or a hundred yards. Moreover, little grass grows under the dark trees, and in the rare clearings such pasture as there is, is wiry, hard, and carries little nourishment. The leaves of a certain palm tree, called pindó, are eaten by the native animals, but it was quite uncertain whether horses accustomed to the sweet grasses of the Patagonian plains would eat them or, having eaten, thrive upon them.

To reach Quito from Piura, on the coast, an arduous journey lay in front of him, of about three hundred miles. If in Peru and Bolivia the intrepid trio had been objects of interest to all, in Ecuador the enthusiasm reached its height. At the first frontier town the authorities and all the "notables," civil and military alike, turned out to greet "Los fenómenos de las Pampas Argentinas." The country people rivalled the authorities in the warmness of

their welcome, and their curiosity.

Mancha and Gato, once the frontier of Ecuador was passed, seem to have been almost deified. Deification, even if spontaneous by the adorers, and involuntary on the part of the subjects, has its inconveniences. Tschiffely, with the "pawky" humour that distinguishes both Scots and Swiss alike, writes in a letter to *La Nacion* that the attention with which his horses and himself were treated made him lose much time, when he had rather have been resting, in answering questions at every place at which they stopped. He had to tell his adventures to all and sundry for a hundred times.

In fact, his progress, through such parts of Ecuador as were inhabited, reminds one of a parliamentary candidate on an election tour, dragged to and fro by his supporters, always obliged to smile and to repeat the self-same "boniment." Even the horses suffered, for the people gathered round to see them feed, and gaze at them with that fixed and apparently uncomprehending stare natural to the Indians of Ecuador and Bolivia.

The road as far as Alausi, some fifty leagues

short of the capital, was only to be described as devilish.

It ran beside the railway line from Guayaquil to Quito and was a series of ups and downs after the fashion of a switchback. The heat was terrible, the track a "razorback" bordered on each side by a sea of mud. At night the temperature fell below freezing-point, and the rain was perpetual.

The troops of mules that, since the Conquest, had plied upon the road carrying all merchandise from the coast to Quito, had made a sort of staircase of the track, leaving great steps, called "camellones" locally. Sometimes the descents were so precipitous and slippery in the deep mud that Mancha and Gato slid down them seated on their haunches, with their forefeet stretched out in front of them. This feat the mules born in the country all understand and practise and many of the older books of travel have woodcuts showing them at work.

To Mancha and Gato this was new, but it was wonderful that they at once learned to execute the feat as to the manner born. The wretched halting-places, called by the ancient

"Inca term of tambos," were filthy in the extreme, malodorous and full of every flying and crawling insect that made life miserable.

Mules and their drivers, pigs, dogs, asses and chickens, slept promiscuously in the corrals attached to the "tambos." Great care had to be exercised that the horses' forage was not stolen or that they were not kicked by any of the mules. All these inconveniences and the state of the road spun out the journey between the coast and Quito for two months.

The horses reached Quito perfectly well and pulling at their bits, but Tschiffely had suffered greatly in his health from hardships and malaria, bad water and execrable food. He had to stop in Quito for six weeks, most of the time in hospital.

The horses, in a hacienda of a Colonel Sturdy, fed on the best of pasture, and waxed fat, getting into such good condition that when Tschiffely, his health restored, mounted them to give an exhibition of their quality, at the request of the authorities of Quito, they jumped about like colts. Gato went at everything with a rush, passing through mudholes in a plunge or two and crossing rotten bridges

without looking at them. Mancha, upon the contrary, if he had to pass a doubtful bridge, tried it with his near front foot, looked at it carefully and only ventured on it after putting down his head to bring his ears and eyes and nostrils on a level with the planks. ("Quel destrier, aveva l'ingegno á maraviglia.")

The first part of the journey to the Colombian frontier, although an eight months' drought had dried up all the pastures, was relatively easy, for there actually were roads.

Through the hot valleys between Pasto and Popayan, unhealthy, mostly composed of forest, where no doubt tigers abounded, and if they camped Tschiffely must have been obliged to light a fire and watch his horses all the night, ready to stand by their heads and quiet them if a tiger's cry were wafted ominously through the woods. From Pasto the route lay through Cali and down the Cauca valley to Medellin, the capital of the State of Antioquia.

All three of the adventurers suffered terribly upon the way. Alternately, sometimes on the same day, they had to climb up into the

Andes and endure cold, snow and icy winds, and then descend into the steamy valleys, where the damp heat rendered it hard to breathe, and the perpetual rain rotted the rider's clothes. Writing from Bogotá on the 10th of October, 1926, after eighteen months upon the road, Tschiffely gives an account of all that they endured. He reveals also his undaunted spirit and his sympathetic attitude to the companions of his extraordinary feat.

Eight months of drought, he says, had burned up everything, "and my poor horses used to stand at the pasture gate, waiting for me at sunrise, without having eaten anything. It would be difficult to express what I felt on such occasions, especially when I was saddling up at sunrise. The poor animals looked at me with the eyes of children, and Mancha, always a 'talker' ('charlatán'), neighed, as it were asking me for what I could not give him, perhaps for ten or twelve hours," after an arduous day.

When Medellin was reached Tschiffely received confirmation of what he had already heard in Lima as to the impossibility of travelling by land to Panama.

The Government of Colombia, through the Argentine Legation at Bogotá, sent to inform Tschiffely that the journey was impossible. No roads existed through the virgin forests that had never yet been trodden by the foot of man. Swamps, lakes and rivers, without bridges, swarming with alligators and with banks so swampy that it would prove impossible, even after crossing, ever to emerge upon hard ground alive, set up a barrier impossible to cross. The forests were quite uninhabited, even by wild Indians. In fact few portions of the globe are more inhospitable or more unknown; few more unhealthy.

Tschiffely went by train and mule-back to Bogotá, only to receive the same report from the Colombian Government. Nothing remained but to embark the horses as far as Panama, but before doing so he obtained a statement from the authorities of the district of the Choco that borders on the Gulf of Darien. In it they said that from personal knowledge of the country any journey from their district into Panama must of necessity result in the death both of the rider and the horses. They alleged once more the lack of

roads, the denseness of the virgin woods and the fact that they had remained as unknown as at the creation of the world.

During his journey by mule-back to Bogotá, he left his horses in a fenced pasture ("potrero") where there was abundant grass. A river ran through it, and an Indian boy gave them two baths a day, and twice a day they fed on sugar-cane, unrefined sugar ("panela"), bran, and a grass called "pasto imperial" that has great nutritive power.

Forced to perform the journey from Medellin to Panama in a river steamboat, a mere step in comparison with the fifteen thousand miles from Buenos Aires to New York, he arrived safely at the Canal, and after fifteen days of quarantine was once more ready for the road.

His spirits rose, his horses were in good condition after their long rest, and he knew the country that lay ahead of him would prove but child's play after that he had just passed. Writing to *La Nacion*, he says: "Once I have passed the State of Costa Rica, where I am told there are bits of the road that present difficulties, the rest is easy.

"I hope in eight, or perhaps nine months to be safely in New York.

"For my part I assure you all that I can do, I shall do. I have no fear of the results and I shall never give up, if it is possible to go forward, and the same supplies to both the horses ('pingos'), I feel sure."

The trio crossed the Canal on a drawbridge, not that they would have been afraid to swim it, for Tschiffely says, "'We' have swum rivers far wider than the Canal."

Just after crossing the Canal, the first accident occurred, for up till then neither of the horses had hurt itself, or suffered anything particular except cold, hunger, heat and the attacks of vampire-bats.

Riding along a muddy trail, Mancha stepped on a piece of half buried rusty wire and cut his foreleg deeply, but, luckily, not near the tendons. The wound was deep and cost them three weeks of delay till it was healed and Mancha ready for the road.

Although he had been told that difficulties awaited him upon the road to San José de Costa Rica, Tschiffely had no idea that they would be so great. The trail from Panama to

the little mountain town of David ran through the forests and was deep in mud. Although he took two guides, they lost the track, and wandered helplessly in the vast jungles, all bound together with lianas, into an almost impenetrable mass.

To regain the lost trail, they were obliged to open what is known as a "picada" with the "machetes" (bush knives) that in those countries every horseman carries at his saddle bow.

Food for the horses there was none except the leaves of a scrub oak and a dwarf palm-tree.

The horses' shoes came off in the thick mud. Tschiffely says with pride, "However, they could travel well enough without them." The rain never ceased for an instant, so that his clothes all became rotten, even his boots rotted off from his feet, and he was obliged to tie the soles on to his feet with strips of hide, for, unlike the horses, he could not travel without shoes.

Malaria once more attacked him, and all he had to fight it off with was the native rum, fiery and raw that, when you swallow it, goes like a torchlight procession down the throat.

When he arrived at San José de Costa Rica in a torrential rain after a forced march of eight leagues, a deputation waited on him with an invitation to a banquet. He was wet to the skin, his boots were sandals tied to his feet with strips of hide. After he had seen Mancha and Gato led off in honour, guests of the Legation of the Argentine, his head whirling with the champagne that he was forced to drink, he staggered to his room in the hotel. A bed with sheets, the first he had seen for months, was so inviting that, wet through as he was, without attempting even to remove his fragmentary boots, he threw himself upon it, and fell asleep. He says he was exhausted, but that the horses were as fresh as when they had started out from Panama.

His health obliged him to remain for several weeks in Panama. As Nicaragua was in a state bordering on anarchy, a prey to the contending factions, swarming with bandits and disbanded soldiers, and horses were extremely scarce, and, of course, contraband of war, he was obliged once more to embark his horses a little distance from Puntarenas (Costa Rica) to La Union in Salvador.

The journey through that small republic was not difficult, but the heat was so intense that it brought out a new attack of the malaria, and in San Salvador (the capital of the republic of El Salvador) he was laid up another fifteen days. His strength exhausted by the hardships of the road and the attacks of fever that he suffered from, he doubted for the first time since he left Buenos Aires of his ultimate success.

However, when he reached Guatemala City, at an altitude of six thousand feet, he soon revived in spirits and in health.

"We" were warmly welcomed by the inhabitants and the Government; society and the learned institutions all joined in honouring "us." The phrase shows the man's character, as well as a whole volume of his "life and miracles." Mancha and Gato, without doubt, were flattered by the attention of the "cultured institutions," and if they could have spoken would probably have done as well as or better than many orators such institutions endure and suffer under.

Tschiffely now felt certain of success. Mexico was a land where gentlemen and horse-

men ("caballero") were synonymous. The country on the whole was not so difficult as any through which he had already passed. His hopes ran high, and in a week or two he thought he would be in the capital (Mexico).

But as the Spanish proverb has it, a hare springs up when you are not expecting her. ("Adonde menos se piensa, salta la lie bre.")

Not far from the bridge at the frontier Gato went lame for the first time since leaving Buenos Aires. At Tapachula he could go no farther. Luckily there was a military post of cavalry. The veterinary surgeon found that the smith in Guatemala had driven a nail into the foot. He cut it out at once, but the hot climate and the perpetual moisture of the rainy season inflamed the wound so much that Tschiffely passed three or four nights, so to speak, at the bedside of the sufferer, applying fomentations to the foot. Gato was almost well, when some "son of a mother who never yet said No" let loose overnight a strange horse in the stable-yard. Next morning Gato had received so terrible a kick on his near fore-leg that he could not lie down. The leg swelled up enormously and everyone told Tschiffely

that the best thing that he could do was to shoot Gato and end his misery.

"It was a rude blow and I was overwhelmed with grief, but I would not even entertain the idea of losing the good horse, companion of 'our' perils on the road."

At once he telegraphed to the Argentine Ambassador in the capital, Senor Roberto Labougli, who replied asking him to send the horse by train to Mexico, where he would be cared for by the best veterinaries.

These delays made him lose a month, but nothing daunted, having procured a guide and bought two horses for him, he once more started out upon the road.

Three or four days' journey convinced him that he would never reach the capital alone, for the road swarmed with bandits and with revolutionaries, words that, as he says, in Mexico have the same meaning.

At the next military post the Commandant refused to let him pass, saying he could not respond for his security if he went on alone.

Hearing the case, the President of the Republic, General Elias Calles, sent out a troop of cavalry to escort Tschiffely on the road.

This was a "gesture," as he says, of "the greatest generosity and sympathy to the Argentine Republic never before accorded to a mere traveller." The truth was that Mexico was all agog to see the "heroes" of the raid.

At every town and hamlet that he passed the inhabitants turned out to greet him, patting and making much of Mancha and doing all that lay within their power to help them on their way.

Even in the humble ranchos of the Indians "they did their best to succour and assist us."

The rains delayed the journey, and the cavalry were not well mounted, so that when they reached Oscara, Mancha alone was not exhausted.

The rivers, too, were swollen with the rains and, as there were no bridges, had to be crossed swimming—a dangerous operation, as they swarmed with alligators. As he advanced amidst general rejoicing, encountering a cooler climate day by day, for the interior plateau of the country ("la meseta de Anahuac") stands at an elevation of six thousand feet, the road grew easier.

At Puebla, the people had arranged a festi-

val "to welcome us," but as fate willed it, he had at once to take to bed, for several days prostrated by malaria.

When he reached Mexico his entry was a triumph, and was telegraphed at once to the whole world.

The streets were packed and as he rode along on Mancha, women came out upon the balconies and showered flowers upon him.

"My joy was without limit, and my feelings unforgettable, when I saw 'friend Gato' ('el amigo Gato') led up quite fresh, and as sound as when he was a colt," owing to the care he had received from the State veterinary, Señor Labougle. During his sojourn in the city he received enormous hospitality from all classes of society, the President himself visiting the horses several times and admiring them.

On the 27th of November he set his face towards the frontier of the United States, leaving a host of friends in Mexico, with both his horses fresh and bounding under him. All through Mexico Tschiffely's journey was a triumphal march, for the news of his coming had been telegraphed from Mexico to every town upon the way. His stages were erratic,

for at times more than a hundred horsemen turned out to escort him on his way. The smallest hamlet hoisted the Argentine flag, sometimes made out of coloured paper, and the nine hundred miles to New Laredo, the frontier town upon the Rio Grande, was like a street during a carnival, that is to say, when they passed through a town. I, who have ridden the whole distance from San Antonio, Texas, to Mexico, and back again, when all the road was perilous from the attacks of the apaches near the frontier, and of the bandits, nearer Mexico, though I remember every village he passed through, can hardly take in the changed circumstances. Across the frontier the authorities had organized a military pageant in honour "of the brave horseman of the Argentine and his two faithful friends." Tschiffely, mounted on Mancha and holding Gato by his side, took the salute, as the troops with their bands playing passed before him. It must have been the proudest moment of his life, and have repaid him for all that he had undergone on his fantastic journey of fifteen thousand miles.

Two thousand kilometres still lay between

the frontier and his goal, and perils of a sort he had not looked for still awaited him. He had hoped to reach New York in June, but invitations, banquets and interviews rained on him. If he had not protested, escorts of cavalry would have accompanied him all through Texas. In San Antonio he was obliged to stay for fifteen days, the guest of the municipality. The same thing happened in Austin, Houston, Fort Worth and Dallas, and invitations from towns far off his route flowed in upon him. When in Fort Worth a compatriot, Don Gustavo Muñiz Barreto, fitted him out with a complete Gaucho costume, "poncho," and wide Turkish trousers, tucked into high patent-leather boots, with silver trappings for his horse. Public enthusiasm knew no bounds. Mancha, on account of his striking colour, was the idol of "las bellas Yanquis," who flocked to see him every day, patting and petting him. They grew so demonstrative in their affection that Tschiffely had to keep strict guard over Mancha or they would have cut off all his mane and tail to keep as souvenirs.

Mancha, who, as we know, enjoyed "fame as a buckjumper" ("tenia fama de reservado")

became so irritable that it was dangerous to go near him; but Gato, more apathetic, took everything "con apatia," and was concerned entirely with the good things of the stable, which he consumed with great enthusiasm.

Both of them grew as fat as Jeshurun, but there is no recorded instance of their ever having kicked.

Once more the local wiseacres shook their long ears and solemnly announced that no horse in the world could stand more than a day or two upon the treated roads. In spite of that, Mancha and Gato advanced steadily, doing their thirty miles a day, passing by St. Louis, Missouri, Indianapolis, and Washington.

As they drew nearer to New York the danger that they ran from the continuous stream of automobiles on the roads was as great as on any portion of his adventurous road. As he rode on, in constant peril from the motor traffic, his mind dwelt always on his goal, and on the joy that he would feel when once again he and his horses arrived safely in Buenos Aires, where, after all their perils and hard work, Gato and Mancha could forget for ever girths, bits and saddles, and the hard-

ships of the road. His dream is fulfilled, and the two faithful companions of his wanderings once more are back again in their own country, after having travelled fifteen thousand miles during their three years' raid. Happier than mankind, they have their Trapalanda upon earth, eat the sweet grasses of their native plains, drink the soft, muddy water of some "arroyo," and though they know it not, never again "the cruel spur shall make them weary."

# “ CREEPS ”

As he stood in the smoking-room of the Hôtel Continental in Tangier, dressed in a faded red hunting-coat that had turned almost the colour of a mulberry through exposure to the weather and the fierce sun of Northern Africa, holding a velvet cap in one hand, and in the other his crop and a pair of weather-stained rein-worn dog-skin gloves, his face almost as weather-beaten as his gloves, few would have taken him for a great artist and a man of genius. He had the air of a second whip to a provincial pack of hounds down on his luck and looking for a place. His cord riding breeches hardly met his cracked and ill-cleaned boots. His spurs were rusty, and had it not been for his hands, well-shaped and delicate, his sleek dark head, and deep brown, almost chocolate eyes, eyes that impelled you to follow them, he might have gone straight on the stage, without any make-up, to play Tony Lumpkin.

Although he spoke to no one, it was evident that he had seen not only every person in the room, but every object in it. For a considerable time he sat, turning over listlessly the

pages of *The Field*, and drinking several stiff whiskies and sodas, that had no effect upon him, except to seem to seal his lips more firmly, not that it seemed a voluntary act, but something born with him, as were his lustrous eyes or his sleek head. His slightly bandy legs he had acquired through early riding, for he was seldom off a horse, holding that Providence would have bestowed four legs on man had he intended him to go afoot. The man was Joseph Crawhall, known to his friends as "Creeps"—why, no one seemed to know.

Unknown all his life to the general public, and even now only appreciated by his fellow artists, he certainly was a man of genius, if any painter ever merited the term. Genius, I take it, is the power of doing anything in such a way that no one else can do it. That (and fifty other things) separates it from talent, for talent merely does in a superior way what other men can do. Thus talent does not excite enmity, as is so often the fate of genius, for we all dislike that a mere man such as ourselves possesses something we can never hope to compass, even by years of unremitting toil.

Those who like myself are quite profane to

the pictorial art, holding it as a miracle—but the mind of man is the greatest of all miracles, a miracle of miracles—that by some few strokes on a flat surface of canvas or of paper, a vase looks round and solid, a horse or stag is made to gallop, or a familiar face is reproduced, could see that there was something wonderful in Crawhall's art. Something there was as I see art—but then of course my vision may be more limited than I suspect—that linked him by pictorial succession to the art of the great draughtsmen of the caves of Altamira.

Crawhall, as they did, left out everything not essential, not as some leave out most that is essential, in their search after originality. Whether the prehistoric artists studied, as I think they must have, for I believe no miracles except that cited above, we do not know. Certainly Crawhall had been kept hard to learn the ribs and trucks of his profession (as Joseph Conrad might have said) in his youth, by his father, a book illustrator of repute in Newcastle-on-Tyne. Thus drawing became like thinking to him, and I think just as subconsciously. It was his speech. His pencil was to

him what the tongue is to other men. He talked with it, for no sachem of the Iroquois could have been more silent in ordinary life. Lavery used to call him the Great Silence, and no one ever better merited the name. Whether he would have produced more if he had drunk less is a moot question. After all, great production is not always a sign of merit, though it implies, as in the case of Sargent, Luca Giordano, Tiepolo and others, extraordinary vitality of hand and brain. All that "Creeps" did produce was perfect of its kind, and certainly no one before or after him, except the Altamiran artists, have produced anything even remotely resembling his work. It may have been on that account that he so strongly influenced the Glasgow school, a group of painters whose aims were totally dissimilar to his, but who all admired and recognised his genius. No place could have suited him better than the Tangier of those days. In it he found exactly all he wanted for his art. Of course wherever he had lived he would have found congenial subjects, for he was not one of those who sought for any subject in particular, but painted what he saw. If he had been con-

demned to live in a house that had no view but into a backyard with a great water-butt at one end of it, that water-butt would have appeared exactly rendered, but somehow differently rendered from the way that any other artist would have drawn it. Thus his art had some affinity to the art of Japan, before the knowledge of perspective under European rules took away so much of its originality.

His methods were his own and differed widely from those of any other painter I have known or read about.

He never held up a pencil between his forefinger and his thumb and seemed to measure spaces in the air. Still less did he when he was painting walk up towards his canvas and walk back again, with the look on his face as of an orphaned archangel looking for the door of Paradise, and execute the rhythmic dance that many painters indulge in, and has always impressed me as one of their most intriguing mysteries.

I hardly ever saw him draw direct from nature.

When he had to paint a horse, a dog, a goat, or any other animal, a branch in which he ex-

celled all painters of his time (perhaps of all time), he would go and look at them for a full hour, with a look so intense it seemed to burn a hole into their skin. Then perhaps, but rarely, he would take a pencil or a piece of coloured chalk out of his pocket, and on the back of an old envelope set down cabalistic signs or dabs of colour, much like the Indian hieroglyphics that I once saw carved on a rock in a cañon near Montery in Mexico, and as indecipherable to the profane.

Next day, he might, or he might not, return and gaze another hour, and when one thought he had forgotten all about the animal, produce a painting so life-like, so strangely similar to the drawings of the cave-dwellers, and yet so tuned to modern vision, that it forced one to regard the animal that he had limned just as he must have seen it for ever afterwards. A sunset he would paint in the same way, looking intently at it and drawing a few wavy lines that he filled in with a light wash of water colour.

Afterwards, in his studio, he would produce a sunset so delicate and imaginative it seemed he must have had a hand in the original.

Most artists, even those of the first rank, produce their works with drops of blood wrung from the soul. "Creeps," I feel sure, suffered no pangs of parturition, and I remember once, when someone said all art was difficult, he answered simply, without a trace of boastfulness, but in the tone of one who states a fact, "No, not at all."

He never strove after originality, but painted as a bird sings, without a thought of the effect it makes. That was the reason, probably, that all he did was so original.

No one could have been less like the ordinary painter of those days as when I first encountered him, looking like a second whip down on his luck.

In his ordinary clothes he had an air as of a stud groom, in a moderately good place. Not that he affected anything horsy in his dress; the horsiness in his appearance came from the interior grace.

He did not stand with his feet wide apart, head on one side and eyes screwed up when horses passed him upon the road.

For all the outward signs he gave, he might not have observed them, but very likely he

would say next day, "That chestnut that passed us in the Soko yesterday had an old bullet wound upon its neck. I saw it when the wind lifted up its mane."

That was a long speech for him and very probably he would not say another word till dinner-time. Still, he had humour of a peculiar kind, upon occasions, but so deep-seated and dispensed with such economy of speech that it was often unperceived, unless the hearer happened himself to be a humorist.

Unluckily for him, and to the regret of all his friends, he now and then had a bout of drinking and would disappear for a day or two, and come back, as it appeared to me, much like the celebrated president of the Ten Tumbler Club of Cupar Angus in the Scottish story, "michtily refreshed," after his potations. On one occasion he was missed from his accustomed haunts longer than usual with him. His friends grew anxious and, led by Bibi Carleton, Bernardino Frias and others of his admirers, they searched the little Tangier of those days, but without finding him. Anselmo, the old Catalan who kept the New York Hotel upon the beach, could give no tidings of him,

although he said, "The horse of Mr. Creeps is in the stable, eating his head off him, and his effects are in his room." Antonio Sotiri, the big Cretan Greek who kept the little café at the corner of the little Soko, where "Creeps" and other commentators were wont to take their "eleven hours," when the sun was over the foreyard, as say the mariners, could give no news of him. Ansaldo at the Continental was as ignorant. As they pursued their search on horseback—for in those days in Tangier no male white Christian ever went afoot—they passed El Rubio, the blind beggar, who sat like Bartimæus begging at the Gate.

That is, he sat there when he had nothing else to do, for although blind, he was accustomed to take back horses to the stables, galloping furiously along the sandy roads, his tattered brown jellab streaming in the wind, his blind eyes staring out on vacancy, and his bare heels drumming on the horse's sides as he flew by shouting out "Balak!" and a stream of oaths in every language. Sometimes he led the tourist to the English church and sometimes to a brothel, for all that came into the Rubio's net was fish, if he was paid for it. The searchers

after "Creeps" drew up their horses and exchanged pleasantries more or less indecent with the blind man, who knew them instantly by their voices, exclaiming, "Ah, Bibi, son of the illegitimate, how goes it with you?" or, "Señor Duque," when he spoke to Bernardino Frias, "there is a man with a fine horse from Abda, would you like to look at him?" and asked for his advice. The Rubio answered with a grin, "By Allah, I would try Hueso de Cochino."

The name, that signifies Pig's Bones, being interpreted, was that of an old Spanish lady who entertained, as Shakespeare puts it, ten or a dozen gentlewomen who maintained themselves by needlework.

Hueso de Cochino was, as she said, the daughter of a general, who was obliged to follow the industry by which she lived, through ill-luck, and the poor exchange of Spanish money, but chiefly through the fault of the evil governments in Spain that had omitted to remunerate her father for his services, so that he had fallen upon bad times. "Spain, señor," she would say, "would be an Eden if God had granted it a decent government, but if He had, no one would have cared

to leave it, even for Paradise."

Slipping and sliding on the greasy cobblestones, down the chief street and past the mosque, and turning to the left up the street that leads to the Zouia of the Sheriff of Wazan and the Hôtel Continental, the rescue party that had now dwindled down to two, Bibi and Frias, passed by an archway just high enough to let a man on horseback ride underneath it. A filthy lane full of all kinds of refuse, orange skins, entrails of chickens, heads of fish, the flotsam and the jetsam of a Moorish household strewed its pavement, all broken into holes, that in wet weather were filled with water that the passing animals splashed on foot passengers. The refuse in the street mingling with the smell of asafoetida, bunches of fresh mint, dried herbs and spices, in the Moorish shops, produced a scent, pungent but still not disagreeable to the nostrils that had become attuned to it. Leaving their horses with the first Moorish boy they passed, with strict injunctions not to let them fight, for both were stallions, and not to tie them up by the bridles to the knocker of a door or grating of a window, to fall asleep or run away and leave them to

their own devices, the riders beat with the handles of their whips upon a door studded with nails and with a little reconnoitring window in the middle of it.

The patroness appeared in person and welcomed in the friends whom she at once recognised for habitual customers. The door led through a little passage six or eight feet long, known as a Zaguan, into a courtyard with rooms all round it, a fountain in the middle, where several girls were dancing with one another to the music of a piano-organ, for it was early in the evening and no man had hired them. She pressed her merchandise upon them, assuring them "upon her health," that she kept no dried tunny or salt codfish in her establishment, but all was fresh and young, wholesome and medically certified.

Filled with an artist's pride in her establishment she stood, a massive figure in a white piqué wrapper, green Moorish slippers on her bare feet, a faded red carnation stuck behind her ear and a wealth of black hair just touched with grey, coarse as a horse's tail, piled high upon her head, with a cheap imitation diamond comb surmounting it.

She had an air of joviality that made her intensely human-looking. At once you saw that she was a kindly creature and that her long experience in the profession had made her tolerant of all the failings of mankind. Born in La Linea de la Concepcion, outside Gibraltar, she spoke a little broken English and at once told her visitors that "Mr. Creeps was in her house, safe, sound and well and at that moment sleeping off the 'wiski' that he had drunk, in the room of a girl from Utrera, Relampagos by name." She added that Relampagos was a good-hearted girl, one who did not lavish her earnings upon some third-rate bull-fighter, and that she was incapable of taking even a centimo out of the purse of anyone in Mr. Creeps' state, for she was a good Christian who went to Mass on Sundays, and upon Saints' days, if she was unoccupied.

She raised her voice and called out, "Relampaguitos, two friends of Mr. Creepsi want to speak to you," and from a room above the courtyard Relampagos appeared. Not too fat, not too thin, as runs the Moorish saying, vivacious as a squirrel, her teeth as white as pearls, her eyes dark, bright and sparkling, her jet-

black lustrous hair, powdered an inch or more above her forehead, to soften off the contour of the face, she well deserved the name of Lightning ("Relampagos") for she was always on the move. She, too, "spik litel Inglis," chiefly terms of professional endearment, having, as she said, "worked a whole year in El Peñon de Gibraltar, amongst the Protestants."

"Creeps" would be ready in a moment, so she said, and was just putting on his shirt that she had washed and ironed for him. She added, she would be sorry when he went, for of all the men that she had known he gave least trouble, speaking but little, eating "not more than eats a sparrow; no, señor," drinking much "wiski," and when not asleep had drawn with charcoal, on the walls of her room, pictures of horses, cows, goats and animals of every kind, and a sketch of her own head, better by far than any photograph.

In a few minutes "Creeps" appeared, quite unembarrassed, greeted his friends, said good-bye to the lady patroness, and kissed Relampagos, leaving a mark on her well-powdered cheek, like the print made by a gull's foot when

it alights upon the sand.

A few days afterwards, as we walked through the "Soko de la fuera," a blind man seated on the ground begged, raising one hand to heaven as he called upon God's name. "Creeps" gave him half a silver dollar, and when I said the man had never seen himself possessed of so much capital, broke into one of his rare smiles, that lit up his whole face, transfiguring it, as if his inner genius struggled to come forth, and answered, "I too have been blind."

# CAMARA DE LOBOS

The winding road paved roughly with dark blocks of stone, like tufa, worn shiny and as slippery as ice in a black windless frost, by the sledge-runners of the local bullock carts, ran on a cliff above the sea.

Smiling and treacherous as life, it lay a sheet of burnished silver, under the westing sun. A faint air, tempered by three thousand miles of passage from the Bahamas, played with, yet hardly ruffled, its deceitful surface.

Here and there jagged rocks stuck up, their base encircled by a foam like soapsuds, that gently swayed when the sea breathed but did not move away.

Eastward, the fantastic shapes of the Deserted Isles, the prismatic colouring of the rocks, veiled by the sea haze, looked like a landscape seen in a mirage, when the sun mocks the eye. A homing fishing-boat, its useless sail flapping against the mast, her crew bent to their oars like galley slaves, but served to show the littleness of man against the sea's infinity.

Columbus in his sojourn in Funchal must

have looked out upon it wistfully, half-knowing that it held a secret, that perhaps he was destined to disclose. The road ran on, through fields of sugar-cane, swaying in the light breeze with a faint whispering, as when the advanced guard of a flight of locust whirrs through the air, or as the Pacific surges kiss the reef of an atoll. It ran through straggling villages, and past Quintas buried in masses of bright flowering, tropic and sub-tropic shrubs. Jacarandás and Bougainvilleas, Durantas, Crotons, Acalyphas, Poinsettias, Maracujás, Daturas, embowered the dazzling white houses with their red-tiled roofs.

Rosemary and alecrin gave out their pungent perfume and roses trailed from every balcony, uncared for, and rejoiced to find themselves unmanured, unpruned, not tied to sticks, nor crucified with nails against a wall. Oxen toiled patiently, dragging the sledges, that replace carts in the island, or resting, chewed the cud, looking as grave as judges seated on the bench, perhaps arriving at as wise decisions, but fortunately unable to communicate them to mankind.

Now and then motors passed, their strident

horns proclaiming progress, that goddess born of hurry and of noise. Along the roads, silent and civil, if a little bovine, trudged endless streams of people, for it was Ash Wednesday, the day of days at Camara de Lobos, the little fishing village that once a year holds the procession of its saint. Most of the men, villagers from the villages that nestle on the skirts of the great hills that form the backbone of the island, wore the dark shapeless coats and jackets, the well-washed unstarched shirts, and flapping wide-brimmed hats, that since the ancient costume fell into disuse have become as it were a uniform both in Madeira and the Canary Islands.

When they met friends, they uncovered gravely and shook hands, calling each other Senhor, for dignity and a high sense of individual value are in the marrow of the race. Some of the more advanced displayed the livery of universal "progress" and wore brown shoes, well-pressed slop suits, soft store hats and neckties of bright colours whose ends dangled and floated in the breeze. None of them wore waistcoats and their open coats disclosed the narrow belly-band complete with

imitation silver clasp, that took its origin in the Bowery of New York.

The women, less the slaves of progress than the men, all wore a full dark-coloured petticoat, under a cotton jacket fitting loosely at the hips. Their jet-black hair, coarse as a Shetland pony's tail, looked blacker still against the fine white woollen scarves they wore about their heads, letting one end fall down upon their backs.

The only animal that man has never tamed is woman, declares a modern, wise philosopher. God grant that he may never do so, for a woman really civilised would have to hide her shame with neutral-tinted spectacles and children would be brought into the world concocted in a laboratory.

Dotted along the road were little taverns entitled "Flor de Pichincha," "O salto de Cavallo," and the like; their legend setting forth that Manoel Silva or Domingo Chaves kept good wines and groceries, all of the best class, "Vendas a dinheiro." In latticed summer-houses sat the daughters and the wives of the inhabitants, looking like women in a pious yoshiwara, for even had their inclination

moved them to any indiscretion, nature had countered it by features such as made virtue hardly a virtue by its facility.

The crowd grew thicker as from every hamlet contingents of the inhabitants swelled its ranks. In the whole world there could not be a quieter, more well-behaved, or a more docile concourse of mankind. No, not if the garden on the Tigris had been thickly populated before the Fall. All had the look of people adequately, but not generously, fed. Though the majority had driven oxen all their lives, delved in the fields and ploughed industriously—for every cultivable foot of ground was cultivated—their hands were not deformed by toil, or gnarled and knotty, like the hands of labourers in Scotland or Castile. Lost in their Hesperidean island they had never fought for liberty in the past. Barbary Corsairs had not descended on their shores to massacre the villagers in the name of Allah and his prophet, he of the curling hair and teeth like hailstones newly fallen upon the sand. Life had gone on harmoniously, without revolutions, or without social turmoil, since the day when the storm-tossed English lovers with the

strange names of D'Arpet and Machin came on the island unawares to find a haven and a grave.

The road wound on, till from a high curve the little port of Camara de Lobos lay disclosed. Shaped like a cockleshell, defended at the mouth by craggy rocks, it broadened out towards the beach. On it, the village boats lay, just afloat, and scarcely swaying in the surge, that set in almost imperceptibly from the calm, glassy sea. They lay as thickly, all touching one another, as pilchards in a barrel, or the canoes in some forgotten river port, in South America.

High-stemmed and brightly painted, they were but little battered by the sea. Hardly a savour either of tar or pitch perfumed the air, and from the taverns by the port no ribald songs or curses belched out of a den thick with tobacco smoke. Occasionally a fado, tinkled on a Portuguese guitar, plaintively pitched in a minor key, broke on the ear. So may the sailors have passed their leisure hours in Ithaca, when once Ulysses was safely off on his adventure to the siege of Troy.

No doubt at times the fishermen must have

seen death at a short cable's distance off, for all their draughts could not have been miraculous and they had often toiled all night and taken nothing, as did their prototypes on Galilee. To-day all recollection of the brief fierce storms that spring up, like a harlot's anger (or her tears) lashing the sea into a foamy fury, was banished from their minds. Dressed in their Sunday clothes, they wended to the little village church, dedicated naturally to St. Peter, the most adventurous of the twelve fishermen who left their nets to follow a more arduous career.

Built in the middle of the plaza, towards which four or five winding streets, paved with round cobble-stones converged, it brooded over the peaceful little port as a hen broods over chickens, at once a mother and the protector of all those who seek the shelter of her wings.

Only Madeira and the Canary Islands possess its style of architecture, with the low, square tower and body of the church built like a convent without an ornament to break the façade. A modest temple, yet adequate for the needs of its Arcadian worshippers. The roof, high-pitched and barrel-shaped, was

painted gaily in light colours, picked out with gilding that the march of time had toned down and harmonised. The altar, bright with gold, had the twisted barley-sugar-looking columns that proclaim the art of Churriguera, that baroque *in excelsis*, only to be found in Spain and Portugal.

A votive ship or two in the dark aisle, an ostrich egg and a dried crocodile testified to the piety of sailors, who, by the intervention of the patron of the church, had emerged safely from the perils of the deep. The holy-water stoop, set in a dark corner behind the door, gave out an ancient fish-like odour, left by the horny fingers of the pious fishermen.

Although unusual in a church, all was so much in keeping with the place and its inhabitants that the strange perfume may have been acceptable to the Deity the fishermen adored. It was packed full of kneeling women whose white shawls gave them an air of nuns. The men, as it were, "stood by," their hats held in their brown hands, their eyes fixed on the altar with the far-off look with which they gazed on the horizon out upon the sea.

The church, filled with its seafaring par-

ishioners, seemed a great fishing boat, with St. Peter at the helm, keeping her "full and by."

The brief Mass over, when the congregation had filed out of the church, the portly priest, still in his vestments, placed himself beneath the purple canopy that was to shelter him on the long tramp with the procession towards the Calvary.

From the dark winding street the bearers of the various saints emerged, carrying upon their shoulders the images that were to be borne in the procession.

The bearers, chosen from the strongest of the younger fishermen, all wore an expression on their faces of pious satisfaction and of resignation to the task that lay before them. They seemed to undertake it in the same spirit that they bent to their oars, when the wind failed them on the sea.

In their rough hands they carried poles, surmounted by a half-moon made of iron, on which to rest their burden when the procession halted for the bearers to get wind. Silently the various companies, devotees of one or other of the saints, fell into line.

Without confusion, and apparently with no directing officers to marshal them, the images took their appointed stands. Heading the procession, grave and dignified, came the patron saint, not the St. Peter who denied his Lord, smote off the ear of the servant of the high priest, or even as when, as the sarcastic witty Apostle to the Gentiles said, he bore a wife about with him. His nets all dried and laid aside for ever, his martyrdom had cleansed him from the weaknesses and follies of the world, but, as his counterfeit presentment showed, had left him still as lovable as when, a fisherman in Galilee, natural laws had proved superior to faith when he essayed to walk upon the lake. Behind him, carrying lighted candles that hardly flickered in the still air, marched a group of women dressed in black. Their faces wore a waxy look, and from their clothes came the stale scent of incense that characterises, in Latin countries, the devout women of the church. Possibly some of them were accomplishing a vow of penitence, but as they all walked barefoot on the stony path, the bystander, even though not a fool, could not distinguish those who had followed Mary Magdalene from

those who had not gone astray. Twisting and writhing like a gigantic snake, the procession climbed the mountain path. The saints upon the shoulders of the men nodded at one another like so many china mandarins, as they swam through the air and seemed to float, borne by some invisible agency.

St. Michael, St. Sebastian, St. James, Santa Teresa, and a goodly dozen of the celestial hierarchy, all newly gilt and painted, graced the occasion and moved the piety of the dense crowd of onlookers that thronged the mountain road. Behind each image of a saint came groups of children dressed as angels, barefooted, with their hair streaming down their backs, bound at the forehead by a silver fillet. Their gauzy wings, their naked little feet, their look of pious innocence and the stout hearts that all must have possessed to face such a stiff climb, barefooted, on such a stony road, inclined one to believe they had escaped from heaven for the day, weary of singing in the celestial choirs, to join their fellow children upon earth and play with them.

Children and banners, and the canopy sheltering the priest, formed a symphony in purple,

for with natural good taste all the procession was in the same tone of colour, without a jarring note. As it passed by, the onlookers stood up, the men uncovered, and now and then an ancient, wearing the national two-eared cap of the Madeira mountaineers, bent one knee upon the ground. All were devout, without the orgasm of faith that in the south of Italy turns the women to Bacchantes and the men into their pagan ancestors, with staring eyes and mouths distorted in their ecstasy.

Still less did they resemble in their behaviour the ribald piety of the Holy Week in Seville, where, as the bearers of images, when they stop to rest and rub their shoulders, look at their burden and after murmuring, "God curse the heavy block of wood," cross themselves piously and fall amuttering a Hail Mary or a Credo, for their souls' benefit. Upward and upward climbed the long purple serpent, the edges of the path all lined with people, silent and well-behaved, experiencing inwardly, perhaps, a spiritual consolation, not manifest, except to the interior vision, which after all is the most satisfying and not subject to the deceptions that so often cheat those who

trust only to what falls upon the retina.

At a turn in the mountain path the last purple banner disappeared. Angels and priest, the high-borne canopy, the gaily painted saints, the pious women draped in their black, the groups of following devout, vanished without a sound, still climbing upwards towards the Calvary. A passing shower obscured the mountains, shrouding them in a veil, such as the dew spreads on a spider's web. On the horizon a sundog just caught the sails of a home-bound fishing-boat, glorifying them for a brief moment, turning them into cloth of gold, before they disappeared. Their pious duty over, the procession turned towards the town, its ranks unbroken, and the companies of fledgling angels plodding along their Via Crucis wearily. The darkness deepened and the faint slurring of the bare feet upon the stones sounded as if a regiment of ghosts was passing.

# FIN DE RACE

NATURE and fortune had combined to shower most of the gifts in their possession on Bernardino de Velasco, Duke of Frias, Hereditary Grand Constable of Castile, Count of Oropesa, of Haro and a Grandee of Spain.

These dignities and titles he had inherited from a long line of ancestors. The Count of Haro of those days was made Grand Constable upon the field of Nájera, where the Black Prince and Pedro the el Cruel, or el Justiciaro, according to the bent of the historian, defeated Du Guesclin, the great mercenary soldier, and Henry de Trastamara, Don Pedro's bastard brother, and the usurper of his throne. Even in those days, the Velascos were an ancient family, for the saying was, "Before that God was God, or the sun lit up the mountains, the Quiros were Quiros and the Velascos, Velascos."*

These things came to him by inheritance, after he had given himself the trouble to be born, as dignities, titles and estates have come

*Antes que Dios fuese Dios ó el sol iluminaba los peñascos,
Los Quiros eran Quiros y los Velascos, Velascos.
The Quiros was another ancient family.

to many a slobbering fool, with piping eunuch's voice, weak knees and weaker mind.

In Bernardino's case, Nature having set her hand to the plough had not looked backwards, but driven a straight furrow, till her task was done. Alert and active as an Arab or a Návajo, his well-shaped hands and feet, his little ears that clung like limpets to his head with its crop of dark brown hair, aquiline nose, small mouth and teeth, as white as, says tradition, were those of Allah's own messenger, our Lord Mahommed, gave him an air of race. When he walked into a room, he looked like a young thoroughbred amongst a bunch of cart-horses.

Quick-witted and a good linguist, he spoke Spanish and English indifferently, for he had been at Eton, and his mother was the daughter of Balfe, the composer of the *Bohemian Girl.* French he was quite at home in, and Portuguese from his long residence in Portuguese East Africa, and Arabic enough to swear at camel-drivers, when their animals upset his horse. His father had been a legendary aristocrat, such as Balzac might well have chosen

for the hero of one of his minor studies of mankind.

Dumas would have seized upon him with avidity, for he appeared to have walked straight from his novels, or rather, never to have emerged from them.

He started life the owner of great estates, that stretched half over Spain from Cordoba to La Rioja, a palace in Madrid, in Biarritz the Villa Frias, and wonderful old houses in several towns, such as La Casa del Cordon in Burgos, a splendid specimen of a Renaissance mansion of a Spanish gentleman.

All these possessions he proceeded to get rid of, chiefly at the gaming table, and by always living as if the Rand, Golconda, Ouro Preto, Kimberley and the platinum mines of the Chọco had been his private property. He died, as befitted a Spanish nobleman of his kidney, greatly impoverished, leaving to his son, Bernardino, but a tithe of his vast properties. What he could not help bequeathing him was his handsome figure and quick wit. His English mother left him her blue eyes and a slight English accent in speaking Spanish that never left him till his dying day. Perhaps it

was not quite an accent, but an intonation, for naturally he spoke his native language perfectly.

His English, although perfect, also still had a faint, almost imperceptible tang about it, such as an iron key, to which a leather label is attached, dropped into a whole pipe of wine, is said to leave a tinge of leather and of iron to the fastidious palate of the connoisseur.

His mother left him, in addition to the intonation and blue eyes, musical talent that his friend and master Sarasate used to say, had he but had the spur of poverty, would have made him one of the first violinists of the world, little inferior to himself.

As a child, he used to play upon his grandfather's violin (a fine Amati), almost by instinct, and after Sarasate took him in hand, as a mere lad at Eton, his aptitude was the delight and the despair of the great virtuoso, who stood entranced when after a few lessons his pupil executed passages with ease that others after months of study failed to execute. Upon the other hand, nothing would make him study, or devote the hours to practice that

alone gives to natural talent technical success. I do not say that Sarasate tore his hair, for he was far too careful of his appearance, but he used to say, "If but Don Bernardino would devote himself for a whole year to music, under my tuition, with the natural talent that he has, and with the halo of his title encompassing his head, he might go to America, that paradise of snobs, and return home a millionaire." Thus spoke Sarasate, much in the vein of Zarathustra (by the mouth of Nietsche), but it was not to be. Nature had done her best, but even she is powerless before fate.

In every branch of life she had done all she could, for Frias was a perfect horseman, with the hands that only nature gives and that no teaching and all the practice in the world cannot supply, for, in the words of the old Spanish saw, "What nature does not give, Salamanca is powerless to lend." A good shot, excellent fencer and a tireless walker, he had a constitution that only years of dissipation at last undermined. With all these gifts, nature had omitted to endow him with a sense of responsibility. All through his life he acted after the fashion of one of Captain Marryat's midship-

men, or like a child sent into a pastrycook's, without the hand of a controlling nurserymaid. What he fancied he would have, no matter at what cost, and yet he was not wanting in a certain kind of common sense. Like many men of his position, he talked twenty per cent above his real ability, from having mingled on familiar terms with politicians of high rank, great artists, writers, engineers, and leaders of society. He had not the least shadow of a pose, and, like all Spaniards, had the same manner when he addressed a carter or a prince.

Women adored him, for he had that magnetic personality that attracts them, as valerian attracts cats, or jam left on a table is a certain lure to wasps.

Nothing was further from his mind than were ulterior motives, and certainly no man ever sought for personal advantage less than he did, from the cradle to the grave.

'Tis true he never paid his debts, except those falsely called of honour, contracted at the card tables, whereas the only real debts of honour are to the baker, butcher, bootmaker and tailor, that a man owes for value he receives.

As a mere boy just after he left Eton, as Count of Haro, for he was not then Duke of Frias, as his father was alive, he drifted to Tangier, as an unpaid secretary to the Spanish minister.

Those were the days when Tangier was one of the most fascinating places in the whole world to live in; a miniature Constantinople, it had representatives of every Court in Europe, a consul-general from the United States, and ministers or consuls, who behaved like ministers, from many South American Republics. Flags of the various nations fluttered from half a hundred houses in the town. Adventurers who styled themselves presidents of Patagonia, kings of Araucania, and other hypothetic states, hoisted the flags of their fantastic countries, and whilst their money lasted, if they were presentable, spoke "diplomatic French," were not seen drunk in public, or committed any flagrant misdemeanour, were received as cordially in the tolerant society of the place as if they had been representatives of real countries to be found upon the map. The Moors looked on them all with awe, mixed with amusement, and regarded them as

amiable madmen who, for some purpose of his own that he had not disclosed, Allah had endowed with the command of fleets and armies, and with mighty engines of destruction, so that it behoved the faithful to walk warily in their dealings with them. Tangier was then one of the dirtiest towns in the whole world, outside of China, but perfectly safe to live in, for robberies were rare and crimes of violence practically unknown, and though most Europeans "packed," as cowpunchers used to say, a pistol, it was quite unnecessary. The advance of progress and international control had not at that time partially cleaned the streets, nor had the scum of the Levant and criminals from Europe made the place nearly as subject to robberies and crimes as are most European towns. Into this pleasant, evil-smelling, picturesque and old-world little town, where every European who could afford five-and-twenty dollars for a horse equipped himself with boots and spurs and rode about splashing the dirty water of the streets on the foot-passengers, with as much disregard of consequences as John the Baptist when he performed mass baptism in the Jordan, the young

Count of Haro was propelled, by destiny. From the first day he found himself at home. As if by magic all the Moors seemed to know him. Certainly he was a striking figure on his horse, with the wind blowing up the front brim of the wide grey felt hat that people wore in those days in Tangier, and his air of careless insouciance, for he was at the age when one has bought the world on credit and not received the bill. He never seemed to go to the Legation, which for that matter seemed to go on quite well without him, under the management of one of those staid diplomatists who, at that time in Spain, either finished up their career at some small German Court or at Madrid, as "Ministre des Affaires Inutiles."

But as even the unpaid secretary of a Legation must have a serious object in his life, Frias, who by this time was one of the chief figures of the British colony, passing much more of his time with them than with his countrymen, entered into partnership with Crawhall, the painter, a kindred spirit and as fine a rider as himself, to hunt the Tangier hounds. He constituted himself master, and nominated Crawhall as first whip, and with

the assistance of a nondescript youth born in Gibraltar, who maltreated English and Spanish, quite indifferently, but had a good acquaintance with all the oaths and the foul language of both tongues, rode well and boldly, and answered to the name of "Mataburro," he started out on the first serious business of his life. Nothing was stranger than to see Frias—for by his father's death he had succeeded to the dukedom—and Crawhall at a meet of the Tangier pack: Frias immaculately dressed in pink, his whip in a weather-stained mulberry-coloured hunting frock, with "Mataburro" in a pair of tightly-fitting Spanish trousers, patched at the seat with cloth of a different colour, a bull-fighter's flat hat from Cordoba, tied with a bit of greasy black elastic underneath the chin, and *alpargatas* on his feet. The pack was a collection such as it would be difficult to match in any country, with its three couple of mangy-looking foxhounds, from Gibraltar, with several mongrels of undecided race that Mataburro always referred to as "the bastards," and three or four half-bred fox-terriers. Foxes were scarce, and the heterogeneous pack ran wildly, the "bastards" keeping

up a perpetual yelping, and at a check, the terriers snapping at the other dogs or fighting fiercely with one another.

Anyone who had a horse came out, and when the run, if there had been one, or in any case the gallop, finished, a cap went round into which Frias always put a sovereign, "to warm it," as he said. It often formed the bulk of the day's takings, for nearly everybody seemed to have forgotten to bring money with him. Some fairly slunk away when they had an opportunity; others remained behind to tighten up their girths, or slacken them, and others cantered off, shouting out, "Adios, Duque, I will send on a sovereign when I get home." Needless to say it never came, but Bernardino cared nothing for it, for by his father's death he found himself, although his father had disposed of most of his estates, with ready money in his pocket that seemed inexhaustible. As they rode home, leaving the pack to be brought back by Mataburro, a duty he performed after having filled his pockets full of stones, to throw at laggers, Frias would show the empty cap to Crawhall with a laugh, and Crawhall, who spoke but little but when

he did so always to the point, would mutter, "What a crowd of sons of bitches," and jog silently along.

These were the halcyon days whilst money lasted, and before Bernardino had turned into the desperate gambler that he afterwards became. Though some of the great family estates had come into his possession, they were but a tithe of those which his father owned. The Villa Frias, in Biarritz, had been sold; most of the lands of El Paular, not far off from Segovia, a domain of mountain and of wood, full of all kinds of game, from wolves, lynxes and wild cats to deer, hares, rabbits and partridges, had gone to satisfy the money-lenders. Gone were the estates in which the mediæval castle of the Frias reared its head upon a rock; the overlordship of the towns that once the family possessed; gone was La Casa del Cordon in Burgos, and the ancestral palace in Madrid. Still, enough had survived that, had Bernardino but possessed a little of that common sense that nature had forgotten to endow him with at birth, he might yet have retrieved his fortunes with good management, for his estates, like those of almost every other

Spanish nobleman, were left to an administrator, and produced but a mere fraction of their worth. Care, prudence, management, were things that Bernardino never understood, if indeed he knew that they existed. Slowly but steadily he began to pile up debts, to borrow money from his administrators, to lend to anyone who asked him, and to tread with filial affection the path his father had marked out for him.

Old-fashioned Spaniards nodded their heads and said that it was lucky that El Duque had not been born a woman, for he was unable to say "No."

Everyone liked him, and he went on hunting his mongrel pack of hounds, gambling and losing far more than he could afford, or sometimes pay, except by giving orders on his administrators, who, like the unjust steward in the Bible, invariably wrote fifty in their books when the amount was ten.

Although he never practised, occasionally he played the violin at High Mass in the Franciscan chapel, rising on one side of the choir, immaculately dressed and executing Sarasate's *Habanera*, or some piece of Chopin's with all

the grace of a consummate virtuoso, whilst the packed audience of every nationality longed to break out into applause, only restraining their admiration because they thought that it would not be pleasing to the Deity.

Outside, the Spanish loafers, Portuguese fishermen, the convicts who had escaped from El Peñon de la Gomera, or from Alhucemas, and the Italian sailors from the port, who had been kneeling in the street, beating their breasts and crossing themselves at the proper places, now and then cursing the hardness of the cobble-stones they kneeled upon, broke into unrestrained applause. Possibly, if he observed them, when he looked down upon the world occasionally, the Deity that the devout were fearful to offend gave them a kindly smile.

It was in Tangier that he met his wife, an English lady who at the time of their marriage was almost as irresponsible as he was himself, and overhead in love with him, as she remained throughout her life, in spite of his long absences, his innumerable infidelities, and his perfect disregard of everything that marriage should imply. The difference between them

was that advancing years, and the feeling of impending catastrophe, that always seemed to hover about Bernardino, making you feel that in the Scottish phrase he was "fey," altered her character and made her fit for a long time to struggle with the money difficulties that soon overwhelmed them.

He himself did not seem to feel that there was any danger, or if he did, resigned himself to fate, like the historic Indian who swept over Niagara in a canoe, ceased paddling, folding his arms before the plunge. Tangier became too difficult to live in, for debts accumulated, and to meet them the only way was to borrow at exorbitant interest from usurers in Madrid, or to sell bits of property at any price that they would fetch. Transferred to Vienna as second or third secretary, Tangier saw nothing of him for several years. No place in Europe could have been so dangerous for him as was the Vienna of those days. A gay society, with nearly all its members votaries of high play, women who changed their lovers almost as often as their gowns, everything was there to attract Bernardino Frias and to encourage him to run more desperately into debt.

With Buda-Pesth for an occasional holiday and a run home to Madrid, where he belonged to all the clubs—and in the clubs in those days in Madrid everyone gambled—the long-expected crash that everyone had seen was bound to come took place. A disagreeable business at the card table, the rights and wrongs of which were never brought to light, and Vienna became too hot for him. Madrid was too expensive for a man in his position, a personal friend of the King, Alfonso XII, the father of the Dom Alfonso now dethroned and a wanderer. Moreover it was not congenial to his wife, who cared nothing for society, and at that time spoke little of the language. Once more he drifted back to Tangier, where he had spent so many of his happiest years. Money was scarcer with him than of old. Crawhall came out only in winter, and his old crony Bibi Carleton was settled in Alcázar el Kebir, running a flour mill, and, to the delight of all his friends, consular agent of Great Britain, with an enormous Union Jack above his house.

Frias and his wife settled down at the "New York Hotel" upon the beach, a third-rate caravanserai run by a Catalan, one Don

Anselmo, a most long-suffering man as regards payment of his bills, and always ready to supply El Duque with any money he required. Not that Anselmo was a usurer, for I believe he never charged a penny for the relatively large sums with which he "facilitated" Bernardino, as runs the Spanish phrase. Frias and his wife, who was a first-class horsewoman, kept several horses, that Mataburro, now better dressed and less disreputable, looked after, and styled himself "the Duke's stud-groom." They went out pigsticking, for Bernardino was a first-class "spear," riding as if he had a dozen necks to break, and still had one to spare in his coat pocket.

The scandal at the Austrian Court became forgotten, and Tangier Society would have opened wide its tolerant portals to them. His wife cared less and less for any gaiety, and Bernardino, who at that time drank far more whisky than was good for him, played cards with all and sundry, losing more than he could afford, with anyone who cared to play with him.

His love affairs were innumerable, although he always said, I think quite honestly, that he

had never really loved another woman than his wife.

Certainly he asked her advice on all occasions, but never followed it. Had he but done so, he would have had a less disastrous ending to his life, for, as the proverb has it, "A woman's advice is of small value, but he who does not take it is a fool."

It never seemed to have occurred to him that he had still two properties in Spain. One, in the province of Cordoba and another in Toledo, just where that province joins Estremadura. The property in Cordoba that was situated on the banks of the Guadalquivir was one of those great flat expanses of alluvial soil common in Andalusia, and was practically a great olive yard. It is quite possible that Bernardino had never seen it in his life, or visited it but once or twice. Though probably encumbered, it was absolutely his own property, inherited from his ancestors. An administrator rack-rented the tenants, and most certainly cheated the owner to the best of his ability. Occasionally Frias would say, I will do this or that "when I receive my olive money." This, I think, was the sole interest

he took in the place, for in those days few Spanish noblemen lived on their estates, but spent their rents either in Madrid or Paris, Biarritz, Deauville or Ostend. In such resorts they passed their time, in what is called High Life, with gamesters, pimps and players, with jockeys, cocottes, bull-fighters, and similar indecencies.

These gentry soon consumed most of what had been left of the great Frias properties. Frias still hung about Tangier, living but poorly with his wife in the "New York Hotel" upon the beach, a hostelry that, with the discomforts of a Spanish *fonda* of those times, still lacked the saving grace of picturesqueness. However, we all frequented it, partly because of "Auld lang syne" and partly because the proprietor Anselmo never sent in a bill unless it was demanded of him, and was always willing to oblige with a small loan without security. Our horses lived in a ramshackle stable at the back, and only cost us a peseta for their keep. Mataburro, who was paid irregularly, presided over the Moorish lads, who served as grooms, and stole the horses' corn with regularity, in spite of various double-thongings that Frias,

Bibi and Crawhall used to administer when they caught him in the act.

Then he would curse a little, rub his shoulders, and swear by all the saints that one day he would have the blood of some of them. Nobody minded what he said, for all knew that, in the words of Molière, "cinq ou six coups de bâton ne font que regaillardir l'amour," and he well knew he was a universal favourite.

All things, apparently, must have an end, and one day, as I sat with the duchess having the concoction of birch bark that passed as tea, Frias came in, and throwing down his whip upon the table, quite with the air of Brennus when he cast his sword into the scales, called for a whisky and announced briefly: "I am ruined and have not a peseta in the world." We all knew that, so no one spoke, till his wife asked him what he proposed to do.

Nothing would make him listen to his wife's advice, that they should leave Tangier and settle down on his own property in Spain and see that it was properly administered. "No, no," he said, "I could not stand life in the Spanish country, the eternal chaffering with

the peasants, or the attending one of the local councils, to debate what price we ought to give for a pair of wolf's ears, when you were certain all the time the man who bought them in had only shot a dog."

It appeared he had heard that in Lisbon the Duke of Albuquerque was going out to Portuguese East Africa, with some kind of an expedition, of which he was the chief. "I'll wire to him," he said, "and see if he can take me with him as deputy administrator, or anything he likes." He framed a telegram, as lawyers say when it figures in your account. Then it appeared he had no money for the telegram.

Anselmo handed him two dollars, and getting on his horse, he said, "I'll take it," and disappeared upon the beach, galloping furiously. An hour passed by and he returned, explaining that he had not sent the telegram, for a poor Spanish woman had begged for alms from him, and as he said, "Whatever could I do?"

Eventually the telegram was sent, and in a day or two the answer came offering him the post of deputy administrator in Mozambique. He sailed from Lisbon, taking with him, luckily as it turned out, a Moor from Sus,

known as Abdallah el Susi, who was much attached to him, as personal servant, groom, gun-carrier, or anything that might turn up in a wild country.

Slight and well-made, active, not very dark in colour, and speaking Spanish perfectly, Abdallah had been in a circus, had visited most of the European capitals, and spoke, as well as Spanish, some English and a word or two of French. A strict Mohammedan, who in his life had never taken any drink, or even smoked a cigarette—for drink, of course, his faith prohibited, and smoking he called "drinking the shameful"—he looked on Frias, as he said, as his father, meaning that he admired him for his open-handedness, his generosity, and his wild ways.

"El Duque is a child of the illegitimate," by which he meant he was afraid of nothing, for in Arabic the phrase is used just as the Spaniards in Cervante's time used "Hideputa," and the Elizabethan English whoreson, either in praise or blame.

After a week in Lisbon and a fortnight in London, getting his colonial outfit of things that generally prove absolutely useless in a

colony, Frias, in his new character of deputy administrator, clothed in a khaki uniform, then a new and mysterious fabric, with a sword enclosed in a leather-covered scabbard, and crowned with a slouch hat such as our troops wore in the Boer War, accompanied by Abdallah, sailed for Port Amelia. During the fortnight he had got rid of the last remains of his own and his wife's ready money, and pawned his violin that his friends had to redeem, and must have sailed almost penniless. Luckily his expenses were all paid.

He left his wife to administer his property. After a long dispute and several law-suits, she managed to get the most urgent of the claims against her husband paid, and some of the usurers who had lent money at monstrous rates of interest satisfied.

Most of her private fortune had been already sacrificed to pay the debts her husband had incurred, chiefly at the card-table.

As was to be expected, Frias and Albuquerque, a careful colonial administrator, soon came to loggerheads, and Frias found himself without a penny, in a colony where white men, except the very poorest, never did

manual work. However, he was still well under forty, and with Abdallah, now his one friend and his companion, went to work at daily wages on the roads. He must have suffered terribly, not in his pride, for Spaniards are devoid of snobbishness, but in the hard toil under the tropic sun, to which his former life had not accustomed him. His real and praiseworthy pride stopped him from writing to his wife for assistance.

Abdallah probably suffered less, for in his youth he had worked as a boatman on the Moroccan coasts. He found a wife amongst his co-religionists, and then, as Frias used to say, "We had better food and got our shirts washed regularly."

Six months went past, and then Abdallah found a second wife, and things went easier, with the two strangely assorted friends.

They bought a boat, and used to take out cargo to the ships in Port Amelia, toiling, as Frias said, like galley slaves, at the great clumsy oars. For a short time they prospered, and Abdallah hired some negroes to help him in the boat.

Frias obtained a post as manager of a

plantation, but soon lost it, as he had no idea of business, hated confinement at a desk, and when his pay came in, used to resort to a little town upon the coast to gamble, indulge in dissipation, and return to the plantation in a miserable state.

Nine years went by, years that he never cared to speak of, but that must have been a hell.

His wife sent money when she could; but he instantly lost it at the gaming-table, drifted once more back to the roads at daily wages, whilst suffering terribly from tropical diseases, the result of working in the sun and rain, with every now and then a trip to Ibo, and its dissipations. By this time Abdallah had become quite a substantial man in a small way. Occasionally he led the prayers in the mosque, began to lard his speech with bits of the Koran, had several children, and was beginning to grow stout.

He never touched an oar, but steered his launch, dressed in immaculate white clothes, with a well-pleated turban on his head, and a stout wooden rosary in his left hand. Nothing impaired his friendship and respect for his old

master, for the nine years of hardships and adventure they had passed together had blotted out all difference of rank, of race, almost of religion, though both of them, as often happens in men of their sort, though lax in practice, were staunch believers in their creeds.

How it all happened Frias never was quite sure. Abdallah, had he survived, would have said that "it was written," which after all is perhaps the best way to explain anything.

Coming back from a vessel in the roads upon a stormy day in their launch laden with merchandise, running the surf that they had negotiated a hundred times, their boat upset. The negro crew swam to shore like Newfoundland dogs, emerging on the sand as easily as a Kanaka rides the surf. Frias, though not a very powerful swimmer, got ashore somehow or other, and lay exhausted on the beach. Abdallah never reappeared.

Thus Frias always used to say: "I lost the best friend that I ever had." Probably this was true enough, for, with the exception of the Moor, of "Creeps" and "Bibi," he had no real friends, after the way of men who easily make

friends with everybody.

After Abdallah's death, and having wasted nine years of his life, if life spent in adventure and hard work is ever really wasted, finding himself with enough money to pay his passage, second- or third-class, he came back to Europe, as penniless as when he set out.

This was the fashion of his coming home:

Seated one day in my flat in Basil Street, cursing the rain that fell as ceaselessly as when Shakespeare's clown was a very little boy, the maid told me that a foreign sailor-looking man wanted to see me at the door. I looked at him, and for the moment did not recognise him. Dressed in an old blue suit, unshaved and miserably thin, white canvas shoes upon his feet and carrying a bundle and a dilapidated suit-case, I hesitated, till he said: "Dino, Bernardino Frias, don't you recognise me?"

We had what is called in Spanish "un cordial abrazo," that is an embrace, such as you read of in the Bible, when friends met after an absence. An hour passed like a minute, as he told of his nine years' purgatory, from which he had returned, penniless and suffering either from malaria, framboesia, or some tropical

disease or other.

Then he went off to join his wife, who lived some little distance out of town.

The luck had turned, if he had only known how to profit by it. During his absence, his wife had shepherded his estates, so that he had a tolerable income, and thus the nine years of exile had not been wasted. For six months all went well, and then he gradually went back to his old ways. "The wild goat always seeks the wood," the proverb says, and in his case the proverb was unfortunately true. Back in Madrid, he soon became a friend of King Alfonso XIII, joined the best clubs, where play was high, and lived with people far richer than himself.

Named Senator for Cadiz, he tried politics, but had no aptitude for them, and fell back to the life of a man without occupation about Madrid.

Then as his wife hated Madrid and had to educate their daughter, he tried country life, on one of his own properties, and built a shooting lodge, where he lived, often for months together, with several boon companions and a girl rather inappropriately called Modesta,

whom he had met at a street corner one night after the theatre.

Not pretty and but moderately faithful to him, she must have cared for him in the way most Spanish women care for the man they live with, treating them half as superior beings and half as children that it is woman's place to work for, put up with their neglect, pardon their infidelities, half to love, half to despise, but not to leave, till they are cast off or till death separates them.

The property "El Deheson del Encinar" had a most curious history, one that in Spain alone would have been possible.

Two hundred and fifty or more years ago, the King of those days borrowed a large sum of money from the Duke of Frias. He gave for his security the lands of the Deheson del Encinar, in the province of Toledo, close to the boundary of Estremadura. Nine miles or so away was situated the castle of Oropesa, an ancestral seat of the Frias family, on a high rock dominating the town of the same name, of which the family were overlords.

The bargain was that the Frias family should own the lands until the debt was paid.

These lands were owned or claimed by five small townships, who from the first protested that their rights had been infringed.

Time passed and the Frias family treated the property as their own, drawing the rents, putting in tenants of their own, and building houses for them, sinking wells, and planting what had practically been waste land with olives, cork trees, and with oaks. It became valuable and the five townships went to the courts alleging that the money had been long ago repaid, but taking no notice of the improvements that the family had made.

Justice in those days was not a speedy matter with the Spaniards. It was so leaden-footed that it became a byword, crystallised in the "pawky" sayings: "Paper and ink and little justice," and "Justice if you like, but not in my house." In the outer world the phrase, "May death come to me from Spain," was a proof of the national deliberation in affairs. Sometimes the Courts decided for the towns and sometimes for the family, according to the greater or the lesser influence the contending parties brought to bear. In either case, the loser instantly appealed, and so the thing went on, a

perfect instance of the "ganging plea" so dear to Scottish as well as Spanish justice in the great days of old.

Sometimes the matter was allowed to rest for years, but naturally such a gold-mine for the lawyers in Madrid was not permitted to remain long derelict.

The Frias family had never had a house on the estate. Either from prudence, a virtue that few of them possessed, or because they had houses or estates all over Spain, or perhaps because they never visited El Deheson except to shoot, they had but seldom made, in Spanish legal phrase, "an act of presence."

Nine miles from Oropesa, and three miles from the nearest made road, the property was approached by a sandy track that ran through oak woods, passing a considerable stream, just where a little chapel known as El Cristo stood. In summer, the water hardly came up to a horse's knees, and as there was a bottom of hard sand, a carriage or a motor-car could pass it easily. In winter, it was quite another matter, and could be crossed, when it was practicable, only on horseback or in a bullock-cart. At times it was a foaming torrent impossible to cross,

and then El Deheson was cut off from the outer world, except by a long detour, for several days. Then the track ran through more wood, and crossed another stream, but smaller than the first, and finally ended quite suddenly in a little clearing, in which stood the house, a long, low, one-storey building, such as a child draws on a slate. All through the woods, silent, deserted, and unearthly-looking after dark, when great moths sailed about and bats flew screaming through the trees, the underwood seemed all alive, just as it does in a primeval forest when night falls and the nocturnal animals set out upon their rounds. Rabbits ran scuttling across the sandy track, hares loped gracefully before the carriage, or the car, dazzled by the lights. Foxes peeped out or barked like jackals in the underwood. Now and then the mewling of a wild cat or a lynx, or an owl's hooting, broke the stillness of the night.

All was so desolate and wild, silent and melancholy under the beams of the Castilian moon that the road might have led to a ranch in Mexico, in the recesses of La Sierra Madre or the Bolson de Mápimi.

In daylight, the house stood stark, surrounded by a few old oaks, without a garden, planted shrubs or anything to soften off the hardness of the Castilian landscape. The fields were not enclosed, but wheat was planted over a vast extent of ground, between the cork trees and the oaks. A stream whose high banks was fringed heavily with willows, ran close to the house. Taking advantage of the cover, in the winter, wolves made their way down from the mountains in their nocturnal raids.

A fence of strong wire-netting, twelve feet at least in height, kept them off from the house. In winter, especially when snow was on the ground, they came and howled outside the barrier, and were answered by the dogs either through terror or by affinity of race. Even in summer they were heard occasionally. Their melancholy, long-drawn-out howl once heard, never to be forgotten, that seems to chill the marrow of the bones, especially when heard alone, far off from houses, with your horse trembling underneath you, was quite in keeping with the wildness of the place.

Grey olive trees and greyer oaks grew out of the red soil. Only the cork trees, when their

bark had been stripped off, leaving a bright, red-looking wound, gave a note of colour standing out vividly in the keen atmosphere of the high Castilian plain.

Some ten miles off La Sierra de Gredos stood out as starkly from the steppe as the Rock of Gibraltar juts up from the sea. Its serrated peaks, unearthly-looking as the mountains of the moon, grey and forbidding in the early morning, at sunset, when the sun's declining rays lighted them up before it set, were a great mass of opaline, or jade, and of rose quartz, irradiating a hundred shades of colour like an old crystal chandelier. In its recesses wandered still the Capra Hispanica, deer, lynxes, wild cats, an occasional bear, together with innumerable wolves.

The whole estate, overrun with rabbits, hares, with flocks of partridges, and bands of wild duck in the winter, was a sportsman's paradise.

In it perhaps the owner passed the last year of his life, if not exactly happily, yet to a great extent absolved from care.

His wife and daughter lived in England, and though he never spoke of them without

respect and loved them as the poet loved Cynara, faithfully, in his own fashion, he seldom saw them, or at the best on a brief run to Paris or Madrid.

All his dependants loved and imposed upon him to the best of their ability. His friends, and almost every woman, called him Dino, and so he lived much as Don Quixote lived, with a thin horse, plenty of equally thin greyhounds, and for all I know a brace of ferrets, as bold as those owned by the Manchegan knight.

In fact, a veritable "Hidalgo de Gotera," that is, a nobleman with a leaky house. Always in want of money, for though the rents of his two properties were not contemptible, Madrid and its temptations were as fatal to his purse as had been the town of Ibo whilst he lived in Africa.

His guards—for in his time all Spanish gentlemen had guards on their estates, who rode about, looked after poachers, frequently standing in with them, pretended to protect the house at night, which they did sleeping comfortably in their own cottages—all swore by him.

A curious set they were, dressed in green corduroy, with a broad baldric, bearing a brass plate embossed with the Frias arms, crossing their chests, short jackets, and brown gaiters and *alpargatas* on their feet. They all rode mares, as they explained, on account of the produce, and carried some sort of gun fastened to their dilapidated Jerezano saddles.

The chief of them, one Nicolas, a tall, athletic man, and first-class rider, had been a sergeant in the Cuban wars. Courteous and affable he was a rogue in grain, but still in his own way was faithful to the Duke, singing his praises upon all occasions, respecting though invariably cheating him, when opportunity occurred.

The second was a bird of quite another feather, by name Ignacio. Honest and taciturn, just as good a horseman as was Nicolas, and a far better shot, his fellows all respected though they feared him, for it was known that in his youth he had killed someone or another, and escaped going either to Ceuta or to El Peñon de la Gomera, in penal servitude, but by a miracle.

The other two were colourless, and they

with one Manuel, a nondescript, whose duties were to go to Oropesa once a day upon his donkey to bring the letters and to collect the news, made up "the guard." These duties, generally, took him nearly all the day, and he returned at nightfall full of excuses for unavoidable delays. Either his donkey had cast a shoe, the train was late, or there were rumours that "bad people" had been seen upon the road, and he had waited to return till he had company. Modesta, helped by a gypsy-looking, untidy girl, ran the house, with one of the guards' wives to do the cooking, serving up thick country soups, stews, seasoned with saffron, and, strange as it may seem, digestible.

Frias, like most Spaniards of his rank, knew and appreciated good cooking, having lived much in Paris, but, like them, was too indolent to bother, or perhaps in his heart despised those who did, and ate all that was set before him without a comment, washing it down with the coarse country wine, almost as strong as brandy, and as intoxicating.

How long this sort of life might have gone on only God knows, and He, as say the Arabs, never tells, so that it does not matter much

whether He knows or not, as we are none the wiser for His knowledge.

Had he lived longer, most likely he would have fallen into poverty, for he still gambled wildly on his visits to Madrid, kept no accounts, and went on generally as if Golconda had been his in tail settled on him and his heirs male.

He kept his looks to the last day he lived, proving the truth of the old Spanish saw: "Figure and genius to the grave."

Always on horseback in all weathers, after long bouts of dissipation in Madrid, one day your damned bronchitis took him, after a common cold.

This, in the keen air of the Castilian uplands, turned to pneumonia. His wild life, joined to the hardships of his nine years in Africa, had broken down a constitution that had been made of iron.

Helped by the gypsy girl, and assisted by an ill country doctor, Modesta tended him up to the last, perhaps with affection, but certainly with a fidelity that in itself was her reward.

If on the night he died the wolves howled in the woods around the house, nothing could have been a more fitting threnody.

# THE STATIONMASTER'S HORSE

After the long war in Paraguay, the little railway built by the tyrant Lopez, that ran from Asuncion to Paraguari, only some thirty miles, fell into a semi-ruinous condition.

It still performed a journey on alternate days, and ran, or rather staggered, along on a rough track, almost unballasted. Sleepers had been taken out for firewood, by the country people here and there, or had decayed and never been replaced. The line was quite unfenced, and now and then a bullock strayed upon it and was run down or sometimes was found sleeping on the track. Then the train stopped, if the engine-driver saw the animal in time. He blew his whistle loudly, the passengers all started, and if the bullock refused to move, got down and stoned it off the line. The bridges luckily were few, and were constructed of the hard imperishable woods so plentiful in Paraguay. They had no railings, and when, after the downpours of the tropics, the streams they crossed were flooded, the water lapped up and covered them to the depth of several inches, so that the train appeared to roll upon

the waters, and gave the passengers an experience they were not likely to forget. The engine-driver kept his eyes fixed firmly on a tree or any other object on the bank, just as a man crossing a flooded stream on horseback dares not look down upon the rushing waters, but stares in front of him, above his horse's head. Overhead bridges fortunately did not exist, and there was but a single cutting in the thirty miles. It filled with water in the rains, and now and then delayed the trains a day or two, but no one minded, for time was what the people had the most of on their hands, and certainly they were not niggardly in the disposal of it.

The engines that burned wood achieved a maximum of ten miles an hour, but again no one minded, for that was greater than the speed of the bullock carts to which they had been accustomed all their lives.

Thus they looked on the railway as a marvel, and spoke of it as a sign of progress that ennobled man and made him truly only a little lower than the angels and the best beloved creation of the Deity.

Shares, dividends, balance sheets, and all the

rest of the mysterious processes without which no railway in these more favoured times can run a yard, were never heard of, for the line was run by Government, who paid the salaries of the engine-drivers, who were all foreigners, when they had any cash in hand. When there was none, the officials, who had all married Paraguayan women, were left dependent on their efforts for a meal.

The telegraph, with the wires sagging like the lianas sagged from tree to tree in the great woods through which the greater portion of the line was built, was seldom in good order, so that as it stopped at the rail-head of the line, the better plan was to entrust a letter to the guard or engine-driver.

Certainly that little line through the primeval forest, with now and then breaks of open plain, dotted here and there, with the dwarf scrubby palms called yatais, was one of the most curious and interesting the world has ever known. The trains in general started an hour or two behind the time that they were supposed to start, picking up passengers like an old-time omnibus. Men standing at the corner of a wood waved coats or handkerchiefs, or in

some cases a green palm leaf, to the engine-driver. He generally slowed down his impetuous career to about three miles an hour, and then the signaller, running alongside, was pulled up by a score of willing hands stretched out to him. In the case when the signaller had women with him, or a package too heavy to be thrown upon a truck in motion, the train would stop, the people scramble up, and haul their package up after them. Sometimes a man on horseback, urging his horse up to the train, with shouts, and blows of his flat-lashed "rebenque" that sounded much severer than they really were, and keeping up a ceaseless drumming of his bare heels upon its flanks, would hand a letter or a little packet to the engine-driver or to some travelling friend. At times the train appeared to stop, for no apparent reason, as nobody appeared out of the forest, either to pass the time of day or to enquire the news. Upon inclines, active young men sprinted behind the train until they caught up the last wagons; then, encouraged by the riders—for to call them "passengers" would be an unnecessary euphemism—and placing a brown hand upon the moving truck, they vaulted inboard and lay

breathless for a minute, perspiring plentifully. At places such as Luque, Itá and Ipacaray, the little townships through which the harbinger of progress ran, the stops were lengthy.

Women in long white sleeveless smocks (their only garment) went about selling "chipa" —the Paraguayan bread of mandioca flour, flavoured with cheese, as indigestible as an old-fashioned Pitcaithly bannock—pieces of sugar-cane, oranges and bananas, rough lumps of dark brown sugar, done up in plantain leaves, and tasting of the lye used in their manufacture, with other delicacies called in Spanish "fruits of the country."* The sun poured down upon the platform, crowded with women, for men were very scarce in Paraguay in those days. They kept up a perpetual shrill chattering in Guarani; occasionally in broken Spanish, plentifully interlarded with interjections, such as Baié pico, Iponaité, Añariu, in their more familiar tongue. Outside the station the donkeys on which the women had brought their merchandise nibbled the waving grass or chased one another in the sand. A scraggy horse or two, looking half starved and saddled with a miser-

*"Frutos del país."

able old native saddle, the stirrups often a mere knot of hide to be held by the naked toes, nodded in the fierce sun with his feet hobbled or fastened to a post. After a longer or a shorter interval, the stationmaster, generally well-dressed in white, his head crowned with an official semi-military cap, his bare feet shoved into carpincho leather slippers down at heel, and smoking a cigar, would appear upon the platform, elbow his way amongst the crowd of women, pinching them and addressing salacious compliments to those he deemed attractive, till he reached the guard or engine-driver, gossip a little with him, and signal to a female porter to ring the starting bell. This she did with a perfunctory air. The engine-driver sounded his whistle shrilly, and the train, in a long series of jerks, as if protesting, bumped off from the platform in a cloud of dust.

Difference of classes may have existed, but only theoretically, like the rights of man, equality, liberty, or any of the other mendacious bywords that mankind loves to write large and disregard. No matter what the passenger unused to Paraguay paid for his ticket, the carriage was at once invaded by the other

travellers, smoking and talking volubly and spitting so profusely that it was evident that no matter what diseases Paraguay was subject to, consumption had no place amongst them.

The jolting was terrific, the heat infernal, and the whole train crowded with people, who sat in open trucks, upon the tops of carriages, on footboards, or on anything that would contain them, smoking and chattering, and in their white clothes as the train slowly jolted onwards, looking like a swarm of butterflies. Certainly its progress was not speedy, but as a general rule it reached its destination, though hours behind its time.

Having to write one day from the railhead at Paraguari to Asuncion, only some thirty miles away, as the train started by a miracle at the hour that it was advertised to start, I missed it, and as the trains ran only on alternate days, the telegraph was not in working order, and no one happened to be going to the capital, someone advised me to borrow a good horse and overtake the train at some of its innumerable stoppages.

The stationmaster lent me his Zebruno, that is a cream colour, so dark as to be almost brown,

with a black mane and tail, a colour that in the Argentine is much esteemed as a sure sign of a good constitution in a horse, and staying power.

He proved a little hard to mount, for he was full of corn and seldom ridden, and more than a little hard to stay upon his back for the first few minutes, a little scary, but high-couraged and as sure-footed as a mule.

I overtook the train some ten miles down the line, at a small station—Itá, if I remember rightly—after a wild ride, on a red sandy road, mostly through forest, close to the railway line, so that it was impossible to lose the track, although I did not know a yard of it.

Now and then it emerged upon the plain, and then, taking the Zebruno by the head, who by this time was settling down a little, I touched him with the spur. He answered, snorting, with a bound, and then I made good time.

I gave the letter to the engine-driver, who put it carefully into the pocket of his belt, crumpling it up so that it looked like a dead locust. Then wishing me good luck on my ride home, for night was falling, the road was almost uninhabited, tigers abounded and there was always a chance of meeting with "bad

people" ("mala gente"), he cursed the country heartily, lit a cigar, spat with precision on to the track, released his lever and slid into the night.

The cream colour, who had got his second wind and rested, reared as the hind-lights passed him, and as I wheeled him, struck into a steady gallop that, as the phrase goes, "soon eats up the leagues."

A light breeze raised his mane a little and set the palm trees rustling, fireflies came out and lit the clumps of the wild orange trees, looking like spirits of disembodied butterflies as they flitted to and fro. Occasionally we—that is the cream colour and myself—had a slight difference of opinion at the crossing of a stream, when the musky scent of an unseen alligator or an ominous rustling in the thickets startled him.

As we cantered into Paraguari, he was still pulling at his bit, and nearly terminated my career in this vale of tears by a wild rush he made to get into his shed, that was too low to let a man pass underneath on horseback. I thanked the stationmaster for his horse, unsaddled him, emptied a tin mug of water over

his sweating back, and threw him down a bundle of fresh Pindó leaves to keep him occupied till he was ready for his maize.

Then I strolled into the station café, where Exaltacion Medina, Joao Ferreira, and, I think, Enrique Clerici were playing billiards, whilst they waited for me.

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